

NITIN A. GOKHALE

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THE TIDE

HOW INDIA
WON THE WAR



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B L O O M S B U R Y
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The Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS), New Delhi, is an autonomous think tank dealing with contemporary issues of national security and conceptual aspects of land warfare, including conventional and sub-conventional conflicts and terrorism. CLAWS conducts research that is futuristic in outlook and policy-oriented in approach.

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To The Indian Soldier

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Preface

The 22-day war between India and Pakistan in September 1965 is a largely forgotten period of India's politico-military-diplomatic history. Writing about a war that took place half a century ago is challenging because of multiple factors: The first challenge was how to make the story of the lesser-known conflict interesting for majority Indians who were born years after the 1965 war. Then there was the question of how to reconcile differing accounts of the war penned by various authors and yet come up with a narrative that will be both readable and authentic.

It was therefore with great trepidation that I agreed in February- March 2015 to discuss the project when Lt Gen BS Nagal (Retd), Director of the Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS), the official think-tank of the Indian Army, first mooted the idea of authoring a 'reader-friendly' history of the 1965 war.

My anxiety was two-fold: First, although in the past I have written books on insurgency, conflicts and specific military operations—Eelam War IV and Operation Meghdoot, for instance—they were penned over a longer period of time. And second, they were not done for a semi-government organisation. In this case, the deadline was extremely short since the golden jubilee of the war was less than six months away. Moreover, the mandate from CLAWS was crystal clear: The book would be based on the official narrative, of course interspersed with other individual accounts as long as they didn't contradict the official version.

However, Gen Nagal's persuasion and my own fascination for military history combined to overcome initial reservations that I harboured. Once I started reading up on the available material, it was clear that the actual war account would not be complete unless the geopolitical context of the time was first explained. So many documents had to be scanned, read and understood. Some declassified American papers, detailed work by Indian, Pakistani and western scholars came in very handy but the best source turned out to be the official history published by the Ministry of Defence (MoD) and of course a detailed account of the 1965 War by none other than Lt Gen Harbakhsh Singh, the then Western Army Commander under whose watch the entire campaign of 1965 was conducted. It is difficult to imagine today that 50 years ago India's Western Command stretched from Kargil to Kutch! Today, that vast area is divided between the Northern Command, the Western Command and the South-Western Command.

But reading history alone was not going to be sufficient. I wanted to try and look at the lay of the land where some of the more famous battles took place in September 1965. So a visit to Khem Karan and Assal Uttar where Pakistan's pride, the Patton tank-equipped 1 Armoured Division was routed by the ingenuity of the Indian soldier, was a must. Then there was Kargil and the famous Point 13620, which I have visited often in the past 15 years. Meeting some of the stalwarts and

veterans was next on the agenda. Talking to them, half a century later, made one realise how difficult the circumstances were in those days and yet how gallant and non-complaining officers and soldiers were. Their insights were precious in putting together a framework for the book.

Of course, without inputs from CLAWS research team—Col Gajendra Salklan, Col Vivek Verma, Geetika Kasturi, Col Deepak Induraj—and their total involvement in the project, Gen Nagal and I would have struggled to finish the manuscript in time. The team liaised with various Army units and regiments, got hold of war diaries and personal accounts replete with some rare photographs and gave invaluable feedback to enrich the content.

As I neared completion of the book, there was a growing dilemma: how to strike a balance between personal stories and official history? There was another kind of pressure: different formations wanted their contribution to the war to be included, no matter how small it may have been. With Gen Nagal's help however, I decided to by and large stick to accounts mentioned in the official history or Gen. Harbakhsh's book. Finding appropriate photographs was a major task. Here again, the contribution of veterans, formations, war history division has been immense.

The hard part was yet to come though. Most popular accounts of late about the 1965 war have spoken about it being a stalemate but a more detailed reading and subsequent assessment made me realise that India not only thwarted Pakistan's designs but also negated every move it made and clawed its way back to turn the tables on Pakistan which, at that point in history, had superior military hardware and was backed by major powers. India on the other hand, was economically weak, was passing through an uncertain political phase following the death of Pandit Nehru and was yet to fully recover from the politico-military-diplomatic humiliation of 1962.

Under the circumstances, Lal Bahadur's Shastri's steely resolve, YB Chavan's pragmatic leadership in the defence ministry and the courage and fortitude of the Indian military not only withstood Pakistan's aggression but, in the end, forced Pakistan on the defensive. In pure statistical terms too, Pakistan lost more territory, more tanks and more men in the war it had initiated. If this is not victory, what is, I found myself asking the question.

Looking back, India could have done better by being bolder in the field and by better appreciating the operational and strategic context. It could have, for instance, deployed its navy in an offensive mode but it did not as the lone chapter on the Indian Navy during the 1965 War in this book will explain. But this is a judgement in retrospect, 50 years later. At that time, it was the best India as a nation could have done. More importantly, in my view, if the Indian military had not gone through the baptism of 1965, it could not have done as spectacularly as it did in 1971 in breaking up Pakistan and help create Bangladesh, a new nation.

The 1965 war thus needed to be recalled in all its details, chronicling the successes and failures primarily because it allowed the Indian Nation to overcome the humiliation of 1962.

Apart from the people mentioned earlier, I would not have taken up this project had Suresh Gopal of Bloomsbury, who had shepherded my previous book on Siachen, had not prevailed over me. He was more confident than me that this book would get done in time. And it has been done, thanks to all-round support from everyone including Paul Vinay Kumar and Jyoti Mehrotra in Bloomsbury. But Gopal's sudden demise in the middle of writing this book robbed me of a mentor who had a great ability to put writers at ease. I will miss him in my future efforts too.

There are several others who have helped shape this book through their insights, comments, helpful suggestions and simple encouragement but are too numerous to mention here. I have broken a promise too in authoring this book: the one I made to my wife Neha after writing the Siachen book in 2014 that I will not take up projects with tight deadlines. But this book had a tighter timeline than the previous book. I owe her one for putting up with my erratic schedules for the past five months. In the end, the responsibility of any shortcomings—and there will always be many in a book of this kind—is mine alone.

New Delhi

August 15, 2015

Nitin A. Gokhale

Acknowledgements

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The Context

The Indian Sub-continent in 1965

In popular imagination, the Operation Cactus Lily in 1971 is seen—rightly so—as India’s greatest military victory. And 16 December is celebrated as Vijay Diwas. The campaign broke up Pakistan, helped create Bangladesh, and erased the painful memories of the politico-diplomatic-military debacle India had suffered against China in 1962.

Yet, before 1971, there was 1965 and the 22-day war that allowed the Indian military to regain its confidence and revise some of its doctrines, upgrade the equipment profile, and revamp the intelligence set-up.

Looking back at that confrontation 50 years on, it is clear that Pakistan saw that period as its best chance to wrest Kashmir from India. Ever since its attempts in 1947–48 to take Kashmir Valley failed, Pakistan had decided to cast its lot with the United States and joined the Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO) and the Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO). It also allowed establishment of American bases in Pakistan and in return received American military aid, as detailed by Alis-tair Lamb in his book *Kashmir: A Disputed Legacy 1846–1990*.

In fact, previously classified papers of the US State Department acknowledge the fact in some detail. US–Pakistani relations had been more consistently positive. ‘The US Government looked to Pakistan as an example of a moderate Muslim state and appreciated Pakistani assistance in holding the line against communist expansion by joining the SEATO in 1954 and the Baghdad Pact (later renamed CENTO) in 1955. Pakistan’s interest in these pacts stemmed from its desire to develop its military and defensive capabilities, which were substantially weaker than those of India. Both the United States and the United Kingdom supplied arms to Pakistan in these years,’ the Office of the Historian of the US State Department notes in its section entitled Milestones 1961–68.

The same document adds: ‘The United States had a history of ambivalent relations with India. During the 1950s, US officials regarded Indian leadership with some caution due to India’s involvement in the Non-Aligned Movement, particularly its prominent role at the Bandung Conference of 1955. The United States hoped to maintain a regional balance of power, which meant not allowing India to influence the political development of other states. However, a 1962 border conflict between India and China ended with a decisive Chinese victory, which motivated the United States and the United Kingdom to provide military supplies to the Indian Army. After the clash with China, India also turned to the Soviet Union for assistance, which placed some strains on US–Indian relations.’

In 1954, America agreed to arm up to five divisions of the Pakistani Army with

latest weapons, and supply modern fighter jets. A Pakistani author has cited that the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) received a massive boost from America. According to one estimate, Pakistan was supplied with 100 F-86 Sabre jets, one squadron of F-104 Star Fighters, 30 B-57 bombers, and four C-130 transport aircraft between 1956 and 1964, allowing it to narrow the gap with India. In 1965, the Pakistani Army's armour strength was superior to that of the Indian Army. The London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies' (IISS) handbook *The Military Balance* recorded that Pakistan had 765 tanks against India's 720 in 1965. Pakistan had nine regiments of the latest Patton tanks supplied by the United States, nine regiments of Shermans, and three regiments of Chaffees. India, on the other hand, was saddled with eight regiments of Shermans, four of Centurians, and two of AMX-XIIIs. Pakistan's artillery was also far superior in quality compared to India's. Besides superiority in field artillery, Pakistan had one heavy regiment of 155 mm guns and 8-inch Howitzers, India was mostly working with 120 mm mortars and one heavy regiment of 7.2-inch guns.

The American military assistance to Pakistan in the mid-1950s may have begun as a hedge against communist expansion, but had since continued unabated for different reasons over the past several decades, such as helping the Afghan resistance against Soviet occupation and later in the 'Global War on Terrorism' at the turn of the century. It continues to this date, completely changing the equation in the sub-continent.

Simultaneously, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's belief that China would never attack India led him to neglect the northern frontier and mostly concentrate India's limited military strength on the western front. The 1960s, however, witnessed a sea change in the geopolitics of the Indian subcontinent.

As relations between India and China first cooled over the disputed border, and then deteriorated to an extent that it led to an armed conflict in the high Himalayas in October–November 1962, Nehru was desperate enough to seek urgent military help from the United States and the United Kingdom for arms, abandoning his principles of non-alignment. To their credit, both Washington and London appreciated the grave threat to India posed by China and ordered emergency shipment of infantry weapons to meet immediate needs.

Nehru, in fact, requested that the United States send 12 squadrons of supersonic aircraft to be based in India in order to fight the Chinese on a long-term basis. John K Galbraith, then US ambassador to India, wrote in his book *Ambassador's Journal*: '(This meant) that the Indians were effectively pleading for military association.' The proposal remained stillborn though, mainly because the Chinese quickly called a halt to its advance into Indian territory. Galbraith reveals in his book that the United States and the United Kingdom were willing to extend emergency military assistance worth \$120 million to India during its national crisis. This was to

include transport aircraft, spare parts, light infantry weapons, ammunition, and communications, engineering and medical equipment. Despite the generous pledge, American assistance to India between October 1962 and September 1965 was to the tune of only \$47 million dollars, much less than initially promised.

The very fact that Washington was willing to help India militarily alarmed Pakistan, but sensing India's vulnerability, it put pressure on both the United States and the United Kingdom to make concessions in Jammu and Kashmir in return for an assurance that it would not attack India during its conflict with China. Defeated and humiliated in the border conflict, Nehru and India were at their weakest point in November 1962. Author Farooq Bajwa writes in *From Kutch to Tashkent: The Indo-Pakistan War of 1965* that 'Pakistan was now forced to confront the bitter reality that the Americans were prepared to arm India without any precondition or pressure on India to make concessions on Kashmir. It must have been a bitter moment for Ayub and the Pakistan establishment that a decade of pro-US alliance was being ignored by the US in favour of its most bitter enemy.'

Despite what Bajwa writes, both British and American foreign policy establishments did put tremendous pressure on India to resume talks with Pakistan on Kashmir in the immediate aftermath of India's 1962 border conflict with China. SN Prasad and UP Thapliyal note in their book, *The India-Pakistan War of 1965: A History*, that six meetings took place between 17 December 1962 and 16 May 1963, 'but Pakistan's rigid stand on Jammu and Kashmir issue and its surrender of some 5,200 sq km of occupied territory (of J&K) to China as a result of a provisional Sino-Pak border agreement rendered further negotiations futile.'

Looking back more than half a century later, it is clear that the shift in American policy towards India sent Pakistan firmly in Chinese arms. Many in the Pakistani establishment saw the American 'betrayal' as a chance to reach out to China, which had just taught India a lesson and appeared to be an implacable enemy of India—as Pakistan was. So Pakistan started courting China for support, particularly over the Kashmir issue. Even as it continued to have a military alliance with the United States, Pakistan started supporting China's entry into the United Nations. China too, sensed the shift in the Pakistani attitude. The first sign of a thaw was the agreement that they could discuss the hitherto undemarcated border between the two. By October 1962, negotiations began and, in less than six months, the two agreed on the final settlement. On 2 March 1963, Pakistan agreed to cede to China the 5,200 sq km of area under Kashmir in Hunza, south of Mintaka Pass. In later years, we would know this area as Shaksgam Valley.

A strong and lasting relationship primarily driven by the anti-India stance of the two countries was about to begin. China saw this development as a chance to wean away a country that had been an important element in the anti-communist bloc that the United States was assiduously building up in Asia. For Pakistan,

China's friendship offered wider strategic choices and freed it partly from the vice-like grip of America. It was win-win for both. No wonder the friendship was later described by Chinese President Hu Jintao as 'deeper than the Indian Ocean and higher than the Himalayas'.

The friendship strengthened progressively. In February 1964, Chinese Premier Chou En-lai during a visit to Pakistan assured his country's full support to Pakistan on the Kashmir issue, thereby also declaring the change in Beijing's hitherto neutral stand. He hoped that the Kashmir dispute would be resolved in accordance with the wishes of the people of Kashmir. This was the exact position Pakistan had taken with regard to Kashmir, insisting on honouring the UN resolutions of 13 August 1948 and 5 January 1949. Till then, Beijing had stayed out of the Kashmir dispute.

At the same time, Pakistan also kept up its diplomatic war of nerves against India. Galbraith notes that Pakistan 'generally maintained this offensive, seeking to exert pressure on India by every means.' Anti-India statements and rhetoric on Kashmir from leaders and political entities in Pakistan were stepped up. Prasad and Thapliyal cite several reports in this regard. On 11 January 1965, Pakistan's Communications Minister Khan A Sabur declared that the government would soon 'find out all possible avenues to liberate the Muslims of occupied Kashmir.' On the same day, a tribal leader, Malik Espain Gul, boasted he would lead 2,500,000 tribesmen trained in guerrilla warfare to Kashmir to 'liberate the state from Indian occupation.' On 7 March 1965, Abdul Hamid Khan, president of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, threatened to liberate the Indian-held territory of Kashmir. As the Kutch crisis escalated, 64 violations were reported all along the Cease-Fire Line (CFL) in just six days, between 25 and 31 March 1965.

Meanwhile, even as China-Pakistan ties were growing stronger, the American military aid continued unabated. Alarmed at the developments, India under Lal Bahadur Shastri and his defence minister YB Chavan (appointed by Jawaharlal Nehru in November 1962) took counter-measures to re-arm, expand, and modernise the Indian military. Arms assistance from the Soviet Union was gratefully accepted. However, India was in no position to wage another war in 1965, having suffered a morale-shattering defeat in 1962. The three services were in the middle of a modernisation and expansion phase and therefore not fully trained or battle-ready, as the tables show (see [Appendix 4](#)). Indeed, the Indian armed forces expansion that had commenced in 1963 was incomplete when the 1965 war began. The troops were semi-trained by the time the war came; the majority of the officers only had between one and three years of service. Then there were the young soldiers recruited post- 1962 to fill the new raisings. The new raisings milked the older units and this resulted in sudden promotions without requisite field or battle experience.

This was one of the reasons why Ayub and his ambitious foreign minister

Bhutto were keen to press home the advantage that Pakistan seemed to enjoy in that particular period by launching an action that would free Kashmir from India's 'clutches'.

As mentioned earlier, the Pakistani leadership was not overly impressed by Nehru's successor, Shastri, and assessed that he was a pushover. Economically too, Pakistan in that period was doing better than India. Politically, Sheikh Abdullah's falling-out with India was seen as an opportune moment by Pakistan, which felt that the Kashmiri population would support an instigated rebellion against India. But more than anything else, Ayub wanted to recover lost political ground domestically by achieving a military victory against India. Some explanation concerning Pakistan's domestic politics of the time is necessary here.

General Ayub Khan had come to power in Pakistan in 1958 on the back of a 'bloodless coup' following the declaration of martial law that year. By 1962 he had introduced a new Constitution. Under the new Constitution, future assembly and presidential elections would have an indirect franchise of 80,000 'basic democrats'. These were people handpicked by the local civil and military officers for their loyalty unnecessary, and could thus be trusted to vote in the manner chosen by the regime. The only election remaining under the terms of the new 1962 Constitution was the presidential election, which was set for 2 January 1965. Against such a background, when in September 1964 the opposition announced that its presidential candidate to challenge Ayub was going to be Miss Fatima Jinnah, the elderly sister of the founder of Pakistan, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, the Ayub camp panicked.

The Jinnah name still carried enormous clout. Fatima Jinnah drew huge crowds during the campaign in both West and East Pakistan, causing deep unease among Ayub's cabinet. Even the staunchly conservative Islamic parties threw their weight behind her.

The government took no chances. The army was out in full force. But despite large-scale vote rigging, Miss Jinnah lost by a mere 10,000 odd votes. As a commentator in Pakistan noted, 'a respectable result given the degree of intimidation and rigging carried out by the military regime. Even Ayub was painfully aware that without the rigging and manipulation, he had in reality lost the presidential election...'

All these factors—Ayub's political desperation and quest for political legitimacy, India's military vulnerability, and Pakistan's newfound friendship with China—meant that Ayub did not think through the consequences of launching yet another military attempt to wrest Kashmir from India. He allowed himself to be goaded by the hawks in his cabinet, notably Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, into forcing a military solution to the Kashmir issue. Subsequent events would show how poor foresight led Ayub into a war he could have easily avoided.

The Opening Gambit

The Kutch Conflict

The seeds of the India–Pakistan war in 1965 were sown in the month of January that year, not in Kashmir, not in Punjab, but in the most unlikely of places: the Rann of Kutch (see [map 1](#)). This area is comprised of two parts: the Great Rann to the north and north-east of Kutch and the Little Rann to the south-east and south. The Great Rann of Kutch forms the southern boundary of Sind, from the south-western border of Rajasthan to the sea.

Back then, the Rann was more remote than many other border areas. There were a few villages in the northern Rann. There was no proper road connectivity; the border patrols had no source of water. Only marshy tracks led to the border. These tracks were submerged under water for six months a year since the area generally remained flooded from June to October by the seawaters pushed into it by the south-west monsoon, turning it into a salt lake.

In January 1965, an Indian Police patrol [remember there was no Border Security Force (BSF) then; it was raised in December 1965] discovered that the Pakistanis had established a 32 km track between Surai and Ding, about a mile and a half inside the Indian border. When the Indians challenged a Pakistani patrol along the newly established track, the Pakistanis charged the Indians of intruding into their territory (see [map 2](#)).

Renowned journalist and author DR Mankekar describes the entire event in some detail: ‘When challenged, they (the Pakistanis) further claimed that the track was actually an old customs trail, which had always been used by the Pakistanis—à la Aksai Chin! Later it was also noticed that Pakistan’s semi-military force, the Indus Rangers, had occupied Kanjarkot and established a standing post there.’

The reference to Aksai Chin was particularly important as China’s act of building a road through the desolate parts of Ladakh some years previously had later become a bone of contention between India and China, in the run-up to the 1962 border war.

To counter the Pakistani mischief, the Central Reserve Police (CRP) moved four companies to Vigokot, some six miles southeast of Kanjarkot. Furthermore, two companies were launched at Sardar, a mere thousand yards from Ding.

At this point, it will help to go back a little in time to trace the antecedence of the events of 1965. It wasn’t as if trouble in Kutch had suddenly erupted at the beginning of 1965. The Kutch border was disputed by Pakistan right from the Partition days.

Sind was annexed by the British in 1843 and was attached to Bombay Presidency and administered by a commissioner from Karachi. In 1935, under the Gov-

ernment of India Act, Sind was designated as a separate province ruled by a governor. The 1935 Act defined the boundaries of Sind as running roughly along the northern edge of the Great Rann. The entire Rann was of course a part of Kutch State. When Cyril Radcliff drew the boundaries on the map, he awarded Sind to Pakistan while Kutch State was integrated into the Indian Union. Given the clear demarcation, there should have been no dispute on the Sind–Kutch border. However, as it turned out, Pakistan claimed the northern half of the Rann of Kutch extending to the 24th parallel north latitude, covering an area of over 9,000 sq km. Pakistan's claims were based on two assumptions: one, that the Rann of Kutch was a landlocked sea or an inland lake separating Sind from Kutch, implying the boundary line must run through its middle, and two, that the northern half of the Rann had been under the jurisdiction of the Sind administration since its annexation by the British in 1843 as was crystal clear from several pre-Partition and post-Partition documents.

India countered the Pakistani claim by pointing to all relevant documents, historical records, various treaties, maps, etc., to establish that the boundary between India and Pakistan along the Rann ran along its northern edge. There was no mention of the 24th parallel latitude in any of the documents. Further, the Rann of Kutch was neither a landlocked sea nor a boundary lake, but only a marshy desert.

Between 1947 and 1956, both sides tried to resolve the dispute diplomatically until Pakistan occupied Chhad Bet (*bet* means high ground) and Pakistani troops fired at the Indian patrol on 19 February 1956. Describing the incident in the official history of the 1965 war, SN Prasad writes: 'At that juncture in 1956, B Squadron of 7 Grenadiers (camel-mounted infantry) was located at Khavda (about 67 km from Bhuj, the region's main town). On 18 February 1956, 7 Grenadiers sent a routine patrol to Chhad Bet, some 72 km from Khavda.' The patrol took close to 30 hours to reach the area in which the Pakistanis had dug in. Prasad continues: 'The Pakistanis, secure in well-dug-in positions, allowed the patrol to enter the area and then opened light machine gun (LMG) fire, injuring a sepoy. The patrol returned fire and in the resultant exchanges, two Indian sepoy were wounded and three camels were killed.'

India protested diplomatically. Pakistan sent a counter-protest note.

Convinced that the Pakistanis were not withdrawing, India prepared to launch an operation to clear the intrusion. The 112 Infantry Brigade, located at Dhrangadhra, was told to move to Bhuj on 22 February. On 24 February, they concentrated at Khavda less a battalion (for the uninitiated, an army brigade normally consists of three battalions, or about 3,000 troops in total). They captured the Bet after a dawn attack on 25 February. The Pakistanis fled, leaving behind their arms and ammunition.

The 1956 incident convinced the Indian authorities that they needed to

strengthen their presence in this remote area. Accordingly, 7 Grenadiers was reorganised as a conventional infantry battalion, the Bhuj airstrip was improved to facilitate landing and taking off of fighter aircraft, and a couple of advanced landing grounds were built at Khavda and Kotda. To overcome the drinking water shortage, a distillation plant was set up at Chhad Bet. The top authorities apprised of the need for improved infrastructure sanctioned the construction of seven roads of strategic importance. After six years of continuous deployment, in November 1962, 112 Infantry Brigade was replaced by 31 Infantry Group as the force responsible for the area—this was around the time India's brief war with China ended.

The situation in 1965 can thus further be analyzed in light of the tensions during the preceding years leading up to the Kutch conflict.

Despite declared intentions to strengthen the border infrastructure in Kutch, India's military presence there continued to remain minimal. Bhuj, the main administrative base in the area, was over 170 km away. Even Khavda was over 100 km from the border. The road between Bhuj and Khavda was liable to breaches during the monsoons. Availability of drinking water was limited.

By contrast, facilities on the Pakistani side were in better shape. Elevated sand dunes immediately to the north of the border on its own side gave Pakistan an unimpeded view of the area. A mid-sized town, Badin, was only 30 km from the border. It was well-equipped to handle large transport as well as fighter aircraft. Badin was also well connected with larger towns like Hyderabad (Sind) and Khairpur. Maintenance of the forces along the border was thus easier on the Pakistani side. Pakistani military writer Farooq Bajwa acknowledges the advantage Pakistan had in Kutch in 1965. In his book *From Kutch to Tashkent: The Indo-Pakistan War of 1965*, Bajwa writes: 'If the Rann of Kutch is viewed as a potential battlefield into which both India and Pakistan wished to deploy a large volume of troops and military equipment, then the region's terrain and communications network clearly favoured Pakistan. Pakistan had a railway connection at Badin, 40 km north of Indian claim line and only 181 km east of Karachi, where Pakistan's 8 Division was based... the distances involved and the terrain meant that Pakistan could quickly and easily move troops from Badin to any point along the Kutch border while other routes could facilitate the troop deployment southward into the disputed area.'

On the ground, a meeting between commanders on both sides on 15 February 1965 failed to resolve the issue. Pakistan continued to maintain that its deployment at Kanjarkot was well within its own territory. A little later, Pakistani forces were reported at Maro, Badia and Rahim-ki-Bazar. Indian protests and various flag meetings had no effect and Pakistan refused to vacate Kanjarkot. On 17 February, the Indian patrol found the fort of Kanjarkot deserted but failed to reoccupy it as there were no specific instructions from the authorities. Pakistan continued to have control of the fort. A flurry of protests and counter-protests followed without solu-

tion, as both sides continued claiming the area to be in their territory.

Available records now show that Pakistan had deployed one company (about 100 soldiers) of Indus Rangers at Kanjarkot, 400-odd Indus Rangers at Rahim-ki-Bazar, and another small strength along the border. Two full battalions were kept in reserve at Hyderabad (Sind) and at Chhor. From the Indian side, five companies of the State Reserve Police (SRP) were deployed at key points like Vigokot, Karim Shahi and Chhad Bet.

It is interesting to note that when the Indian police patrol reported the intrusion by the Pakistanis, commanding officer (CO) of 1 Mahar Lieutenant Colonel K Sundarji (he later went on to become one of the more famous and flamboyant chiefs of the Indian Army) was officiating as the Brigade commander. On being told of the Pakistani mischief, Sundarji toured the forward area in police uniform to personally assess the situation. He recommended immediate recapture of Kanjarkot but was denied permission.

Soon thereafter though, 31 Brigade Group, headquartered at Khavda, was alerted to their upcoming task of capturing Kanjarkot. On 21 February, the general officer commanding (GOC) for Maharashtra and Gujarat area ordered the 31 Brigade commander to capture Kanjarkot. Brigadier SSM Pahalajani was authorised to cross the border if necessary to complete the task. Looking back, the authorisation was not only bold but unprecedented as well. In retrospect, it is easy to see why. In 1965, India and Pakistan were largely trying to sort their problems out bilaterally. Of course, the nuclear dimension had not crept into the equation then—unlike during the Kargil conflict in 1999 when this aspect prevented Indian decision makers from allowing the Indian forces to cross the LoC.

However, more about that later, as I will explore later in this book.

By 27 February, 31 Brigade Group was ready for action. A para battalion was placed on high alert and was ready to assist 31 Brigade Group at twenty-four hours' notice.

War clouds were building up on the Indian side, and Pakistan was not sitting quietly either. Perhaps aware of the Indian measures, Pakistan ordered Major General Tikka Khan, the GOC of 8 Division, to take charge of the Indus Rangers and also pushed 51 Brigade Group forward.

Pakistan established a standing post at Kanjarkot on 3 March. India tried to settle the issue through diplomatic channels and flag meetings but without any result. Both the union home minister and the Gujarat chief minister made visits to the area to ascertain the seriousness of the situation. Members of the Opposition parties were briefed on the latest developments. The Army chief was present at this meeting.

Some action was required. Indeed, a number of significant activities took place in this context.

The Gujarat government reinforced Indian presence in the area with an additional four companies.



Indian soldiers in Kutch

On 13 March, India established a post at Sardar, a short distance south of Ding and around 4.5 km from Kanjarkot. Some outposts were established for protection

of the Sardar post. Another post was established at Vigokot, around seven kilometres southeast of Sardar.

Pakistan established a post at Ding on 15 March. Ding lay some 2,000 yards within Indian territory. This meant Pakistan was in occupation of nearly 13,000 acres of Indian territory on that date.

On 7 April, Pakistan lodged a protest asking India to withdraw from their newly established posts. The next day, on 8 April, the deputy high commissioner of Pakistan was called to the Ministry of External Affairs and asked to withdraw troops from the two posts that had been established at Kanjarkot and Ding.

However, as it turned out, Pakistan had other intentions and had already drawn up plans for assault on the Kutch border posts in the second week of March 1965. By 25 March, Pakistan had moved 51st Infantry Brigade from Karachi to the Kutch border. The campaign to retain the post at Kanjarkot was given the code name Operation Haider (Desert Hawk in Indian accounts). For this purpose, the entire 8 Infantry Division along with 12 Cavalry and 19 Lancer were deployed in the sector. Pakistan Air Force (PAF) was not to be forgotten. They activated the Badin airfield and their aircraft flew a number of visual and photo reconnaissance sorties in the area.

The Pakistanis had feared an Indian attack on Kanjarkot and wanted to forestall it by attacking the CRP battalion deployed at the Sardar post. The Sardar post had recently been set up, as mentioned earlier, and was manned by four companies, one of which was on patrol about 1.3 km from the main base.

The Pakistanis had decided to utilise the full 51 Brigade for the attack. The battalions involved were 18 (Pakistan) Punjab, 8 Frontier Force and 6 Baluch, which was actually the brigade reserve. Initially the attack was planned for 7–8 April but the battalions could not gather at launch point. The attack was thus postponed by 24 hours. It finally commenced at 1 am on 9 April. Much to the consternation of the Pakistani leadership, the attack—despite superior numbers—went wrong from the word go.

Lack of coordination between 18 (Pakistan) Punjab and 8 Frontier Force resulted in both going for the same target. One company managed to reach the Indian defence line but the alert CRP repulsed the attack. The brave policemen not only repulsed the attack but also showed remarkable tactical battle superiority over the attacking Pakistani Army. The Pakistanis had support from a field regiment and a heavy mortar battery, yet they could not benefit from the large-scale attack. They suffered heavy casualties due to pinpointed, accurate small-arms fire by the CRP personnel, although man for man the latter were outnumbered by the Pakistani brigade. Available material from that time suggests the Pakistani Brigade commander lost his nerve and made a wrong assumption. In fact, the official history quotes General Sundarji as saying: ‘Had the Pakistan Brigade commander kept up his ef-

fort for some more time, they could have captured the post, but thinking that Indian reinforcements would be coming soon, he withdrew the forces.'



Keeping vigil in the arid desert

Aware of their vulnerability, the CRP personnel, after boldly facing the enemy, withdrew to Vigokot, abandoning the Sardar post. Soon after the first skirmish, Brigadier Pahalajani took over as commander of 31 Infantry Group from General Sundarji, who went back to command 1 Mahar.

Both sides claimed heavy casualties on the other side. Pakistani Major Saeed Ahmad, in his book *The Indo-Pak Clash in the Rann of Kutch*, says that wireless intercepts and physical count showed that India had suffered almost 200 casualties, besides having 21 captured, including one officer, Major Karnail Singh. General Sundarji, on the other hand, saw many Pakistani bodies strewn all over.

Events moved very fast thereafter. The DIG of Gujarat Police, fearing another attack on the Vigokot post held by CRP and the police, withdrew two of his companies. The same night as the first clash, a company of 17 Rajputana Rifles arrived at the Vigokot post. By 8 am on 11 April, 2 Sikh Light Infantry (LI) and a battery of 11 Field Regiment had arrived at Vigokot to replace the police. That same day, the newly arrived 2 Sikh LI sent a small patrol up ahead to the Kanjarkot post to check if the Pakistanis were still there. The troops took 24 hours to reach there. The patrol discovered that at least 200 (two companies' strength) Pakistanis were deployed at the Kanjarkot post. The patrol also reported the presence of one recoil-less (RCL) gun.

After the 2 Sikh LI patrol returned to Vigokot, artillery and mortar exchanges continued between the Indian and Pakistani forces. General Sundarji told the two historians who wrote the official history of the 1965 war that like the Pakistani Brigade commander, Brigadier Pahalajani too hesitated in taking resolute action. The historians quote General Sundarji saying that the troops of 1 Mahar used to launch raids inside Pakistani territory but Brigadier Pahalajani ordered that they stop the action.

It was at this time that an important development took place. Air Marshal Asghar Khan, commander-in-chief of Pakistan Air Force, called the Indian Air Force (IAF) chief, Air Marshal Arjan Singh. During the conversation, he proposed that both air forces refrain from flying over the 'disputed' (Kanjarkot) area. Arjan Singh told him that two Pakistani Air Observation Post (OP) aircraft had flown over that area. Asghar Khan mentioned that these aircraft were under the Army's control and that he would speak to Army HQ about it. Arjan Singh was non-committal and said he would have to refer the idea to his political leadership. He also said that aircraft operation would depend on the prevalent situation. There was no question of any agreement between them. As far as he was concerned, it was sensible that both sides place some restrictions on flying over the area and close to the border to avoid aggravating tensions. As intimated to Asghar Khan, Arjan Singh sent a note to the defence minister and the other chiefs. Part of the note said:

He (Asghar) suggested that the Fighters and Bomber aircraft of both the Air Forces should not fly within ten miles of the border as claimed by both sides. I responded to this suggestion. I told him that our helicopters and transport aircraft will be used right up to the positions of our troops for resupply and other purposes. We, therefore, felt that this restriction would not apply to helicopter and light and transport aircraft.

All this may be an indication that Pakistan is not eager to escalate fighting in the Kanjarkot area.

Notwithstanding, the conversation between the two air chiefs the IAF did fly a few sorties the very next day, which was 13 April. It was reported that even Pakistan did not stick to the 'agreement' and sent its latest acquisition, F-104 Starfighters, into the area for reconnaissance.

However, that was not the whole story. Arjan Singh maintained a personal diary, which contained this entry: 'Asghar Khan, on the telephone from Peshawar, said that we should ensure that there is no incident which may (unintentionally) commit the air forces into the battle. I entirely agreed with this sentiment.' The diary goes on to record five days later, on 17 April, that the PAF air attaché urgently sought the Air Chief. The diary reads: 'I was horrified to see that in the proposal which Asghar had sent, he had mentioned that IAF aircraft should not fly within 10 miles of 24 degrees latitude. This was the first time that they had re-

vealed their intentions.’ If such an agreement had been accepted, then it would have given some degree of legitimacy to Pakistan’s claim of over 3,500 square miles of Indian territory. The diary continues: ‘I flatly refused to accept such a proposal.’

Arjan Singh called Asghar Khan a little later and asked him to brief his air attaché in Peshawar. Asghar Khan, of course, does not mention the episode in his book. Thus, there clearly was no agreement between the two air forces regarding non-use of air power in the area.

Even before the message from Asghar Khan was received, IAF was put on alert and their squadrons were augmented by pilots from training institutions. Of course, it was not that all pilots in training had to report for duty at the border, or that the training institutions were closed down completely for the time being. Only a small number of pilots were sent to the operational units and they returned to their institutions by early June.

Pakistan had deployed one flight of No. 1 Army Aviation Squadron at Badin from mid-April to 6 May; it operated from advanced landing grounds (ALG) at Diplo and Ali Bunder. The flight was extensively used for reconnaissance and direction of artillery fire.

Meanwhile, India realised it needed to reset the defences at Kutch. The Indian forces operating in the sector were named the Kilo Force on 10 April and Major General OP Dunn was designated as their first general officer commanding. India’s only parachute brigade (50th Independent Para Brigade) was put at the disposal of the Kilo Force. Yet, instead of the usual three battalions, only two battalions were given to the Kutch sector. By 20 April, the two para battalions were deployed in the Khavda, Dharamsala and Biar Bet areas. That the Kilo Force decided to lay anti-tank mines in the Vigokot area and brought in 106 mm RCL guns and 3.5-inch bazookas, indicated that India apprehended a major tank attack in the area. The RCL guns were used to target tanks from a distance and were a major deterrent against tank attacks.

Years later, the same name – Kilo Force – would be used for an important sector in Kashmir Valley. Even now, Kilo Force in Kashmir is a vital part of the counter-insurgency, counter-terrorism campaign of the Indian military.

As the Kilo Force organised itself and began deployment in key areas, Pakistan moved its entire 8 Division to Hyderabad (Sind) from Karachi in anticipation of a major showdown. It had an integral artillery brigade, commanded by SM Aslam, and three infantry brigades – 6 Brigade under Iftikhar Janjua, 51 Brigade under KM Azhar, and 52 Brigade led by Sardar Ismail.

Major General Tikka Khan, GOC of 8 Division, carried out a reappraisal of the situation as on 12 April. Bajwa writes: ‘On 18 April, Tikka Khan ordered 6 Brigade under Brigadier Iftikhar Janjua to move to the Rahim-ki-Bazar–Jat Trai

area and, with the help of armoured regiments at its disposal, to dominate the no man's land. This was a more aggressive posture than before and the Pakistani build-up across the border, particularly tanks, did not go unnoticed by India.'

On the other hand, India's Army headquarters was unable to meet the request for more troops and armour by the GOC of the Kilo Force, since the difficulties of terrain and logistics in Kutch were self-evident. General Dunn was instead asked to hold his ground and not plan any offensive, according to KC Praval's *India's Para-troopers*.

Pakistan's Operation Arrow Head

Pakistan reinforced its 8 Division with additional troops and other resources in preparation for the launch of Operation Desert Hawk II. On the night of 19–20 April, Pakistani battalions of 6 Punjab and 15 Punjab began to aggressively patrol the area near Vigokot and unleashed fierce artillery fire on Sera Bet (also known as Point 84) in the Chhad Bet area, held by State Reserve Police (SRP). The heavy shelling forced the Indians to abandon the post. The next day, Major General Dunn ordered 3 Para to reoccupy Point 84 since in his assessment Pakistan would not initiate an allout attack, given its experience at the Sardar post. Moreover, the Indian commanders felt that Pakistan would wait until 15 May, when monsoon rains would have forced India to scale down its deployment from the Rann.

Nevertheless, on 23 April, General Mohammad Musa, commander-in-chief of the Pakistani Army, gave the go-ahead for Operation Arrow Head. The orders said: '6 Brigade Group will be established in area south of Jatrai up to Biar Bet not later than 1800 hrs today. Enemy post at Biar Bet will be dislodged at the earliest opportunity. Position will be dug and mined and prepared for allround defence. Enemy will be enticed to attack this position and maximum casualties inflicted on him. There will be no withdrawal from this position without permission from GHQ. No attack on Chhad Bet.'

Within hours of receiving the order, the 6 Brigade commander fixed 0230 hours on 24 April as the time to launch the attack on Sera Bet, to be followed by targeting Biar Bet and Chhad Bet. As mentioned earlier, Sera Bet was held by Bravo Company of 3 Para battalion, led by Major PP Singh. There was a small support available to the company (about 70 troops) from a troop of 17 Para Field Regiment and a section that had medium machine guns (MMGs) and RCL guns. Throughout the night of 23–24 April, the company could hear the movement of the enemy's armour. As the shelling began at 0230 hours, the Indians knew they were now facing the big attack. By daylight the men of 3 Para could see the Pakistanis, almost in full battalion strength (1,000 men), advancing menacingly towards their post. The Indian troops opened up whatever firepower they had with them in the form of artillery, MMGs and 3 inch mortars. For an hour, this fierce attack halted the Pakistani advance, but the attackers soon brought in the tanks and armoured

personnel carriers (APCs). The RCLs on the Indian side came into play; two or three tanks were apparently immobilised or hit. But the combined weight of the tank squadrons and the 'fire and move' tactics by the Pakistani armour proved too heavy at the end.

Finding no alternative, Major PP Singh ordered the withdrawal of his company. In five hours, a combined tank and artillery attack led to the fall of Sera Bet. The Indians executed a disciplined retreat, managing to keep their casualties down to one killed, two wounded and nine missing. Surprisingly, *The India-Pakistan War of 1965: A History* by SN Prasad and UP Thapliyal says that 'the Pakistanis suffered heavy casualties estimated to be 100 killed/ wounded.'

Biar Bet was the next target. It was being manned by Alfa Company of 3 Para led by Major Kumar. Like at Sera Bet, it was supported by a small section of 17 Para Field Regiment, MMGs and RCLs. For the next twenty-four hours, a fierce battle ensued between what were essentially unequal forces (Pakistanis had tanks and artillery, Indian forces were without any armour support and had minimal artillery). On 25 April, a Pakistani patrol aboard three APCs approached the A Company's position at around 1630 hours. The company opened up all the weapons that were at its disposal, forcing the Pakistanis to halt. An hour later, 12 tanks were brought into the battle by the advancing Pakistanis. As night fell, there was a temporary lull.

The next morning was an entirely different ball game. Two squadrons of Pakistani tanks, APCs and heavy artillery launched an all-out attack on Bier Bet. The A Company retaliated with all that they had – MMGs, RCLs, artilleries, small arms – but soon the small strength of the company wilted under the heavy Pakistani attack. Major Kumar ordered withdrawal to Dharamsala. Most of the company made it back safely. According to the account by 3 Para quoted in *The India-Pakistan War of 1965: A History*, the Pakistanis reportedly suffered over 140 casualties in this encounter.

Pakistanis had captured Biar Bet by 26 April. A large quantity of arms and equipment was left behind by the retreating Indian forces. This gave the Pakistanis a chance to fly national and international media to Biar Bet and display the left-behind consignment.

The Ceasefire

Expectedly, public opinion in India was inflamed. It sought quick retaliation. Memories of a war lost in another distant location – North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA) and Ladakh in 1962 – were rekindled. Defence Minister YB Chavan, who had taken over from the discredited Krishna Menon in the wake of the 1962 humiliation and was in the process of rebuilding and expanding the Indian military, took the floor in the Parliament and announced that the armed forces had been put on alert following general mobilisation in Pakistan. All leaves for military personnel

were cancelled and many were recalled from home. Large-scale military movement had begun on the Indian side and Indian troops were concentrating along other sectors of the India–Pakistan border, particularly along the Punjab border where India had superior numbers. Pakistan, too, placed its army at a twelve-hour notice.

According to Bajwa, India was expecting more attacks in Kutch using armour and artillery, leading to anger and concern in New Delhi. He quotes American papers to say this: ‘On 24 April, General JN Chaudhuri, the Indian Army commander-in-chief, called senior military officers based at the American Embassy in Delhi and began by stating dramatically, “Gentlemen, I am faced with a crisis.” He then gave an outline of the military position at Kutch and said that the Pakistani attack at Biar Bet was launched using Chaffee tanks in squadron force... Chaudhuri said it was his clear understanding that if either India or Pakistan used US weapons on each other and not against communist threats, then the US would intervene, and he wanted to know what the US planned to do.’

Bajwa goes on to say: ‘On the same day in the White House, a memorandum was prepared on exactly this matter, the facts and regulations regarding the use of American weapons by Pakistan; it was emphasised that although hard facts were difficult to come by, it appeared clear that Pakistan had a military advantage thanks to the terrain it was exploiting and was using force equipped by the US. It did not however criticise the use of American weapons, nor did it suggest any action to prevent their use.’

Declassified papers now available suggest that the US ambassador to Pakistan at the time, Walter McConaughy, sent a lengthy cable to Washington detailing his apprehension over the Kutch clash. The cable dated 27 April 1965 said:

1. ‘Events relating to Rann of Kutch clash seem to be propelling us toward milestone in US relations with Pakistan and India. Thanks to needlessly belligerent and self-centered actions of both countries, not only are we faced with a major crisis in Indo–Pak relations, but major crises in US–Indian and US–Pak relations. Immediate issues are of course fighting in Rann of Kutch and use of Military Assistance Programme (MAP) equipment there by Paks.

‘But, in fact, much broader issues involving our position on Subcontinent are actually at stake. Rann of Kutch has made it clear that US and UK cannot safely remain aloof from intramural Indo–Pak disputes although they are not of our making. US assistance is significant factor in enhanced military capabilities of both countries. In case of Pakistan five and one-half of its seven and one-half divisions are MAP-supported. In the case of India, US military aid and US assistance in defense production area serve indirectly if not directly to upgrade appreciably India’s ability to sustain operations like Rann of Kutch engagements. This broadest context of issue posed

by Rann of Kutch is how to avoid frustration of US efforts, undertaken in both countries at enormous cost, which would surely result from enlarged and prolonged hostilities.'

2. 'Regardless of merits, India's claim that Paks are employing MAP equipment in Rann of Kutch for aggression or Pakistani contention that its actions are justifiable defensive reactions to Indian encroachments disrupting long-established equilibrium in upper half of Rann, present situation is not tolerable for us in terms [of] our essential interests in Subcontinent.

'We are faced thus by a most crucial dilemma. To withdraw MAP support from Pakistan, however justifiable in the abstract would be to open here a Pandora's box of outright neutralism and sweeping policy reorientation. MAP is lifeblood of Pak national security. If Paks are cut off from MAP because of its use in disputes with India, where facts (other than shared culpability [of] both sides) have always been almost impossible to sort out and with Indians still benefitting from US military equipment while still not entirely dependent on it, Paks will consider that they have no choice but to look elsewhere for military support and guarantees against aggression. In our view, it would be difficult to over-estimate the emotional impact of this issue in Pakistan, or the adverse effect on the American presence here, including without doubt status of our special facilities, that would flow from a rupture of the Military Assistance Programme. Yet, to decline to control in some effective way improper or questionable Pak employment of MAP equipment would be impossible to defend not only before Congress and in India, but [also] in terms [of] our ability to exercise influence through MAP on Paks.'

3. 'We see no clear answer to this dilemma. To move all the way to either of these alternatives would have far-reaching ominous implications, forcing [the] very choice between India and Pakistan we wish to avoid. In the case before us, we consider that the only course we can readily live with is one which makes the choice unnecessary in present inflamed circumstances [garble], one of either reversion to 1960 arrangements in Rann of Kutch, including agreed ground rules, or an immediate and unconditional ceasefire. We might thus avoid involvement in merits of case or need for decision for the present on the MAP issue—although we probably must face up to latter over longer run. We urge full weight of US Government be put behind British good offices effort, both here and in Delhi.'

4. 'To reinforce this effort, Paks must be admonished again at highest level that US MAP programs, apart from legal interpretations, [stand] clearly jeopardized as a defensible practical proposition by continuation of Rann of Kutch fighting. I believe I can get this across to President Ayub in

a form that he will comprehend without undue resentment.

‘At [the] same time, responsibility for concoction and vigorous stirring of Rann of Kutch witches’ brew rests equally on Pak and Indian shoulders. Our warning to GOP therefore should be matched with similar emphatic warning to GOI, particularly in view [of] GOI threats to extend conflict to other areas, apparent Indian interest in compounding our difficulties in Pakistan, and Indian exploitation of [garble—closer?] Soviet ties. Both GOP and GOI must be faced with [the] fact that aid to both will be imperiled if they do not buckle down to [the] business of arranging immediate ceasefire.’

Although the Americans did not put direct pressure on the president of Pakistan General Ayub Khan, public opinion in India, which clamoured for appropriate retaliation, forced him to consider the possibility of a full-scale war breaking out, a risk he was not prepared to take at that juncture.

In Delhi, Indian Foreign Secretary CS Jha told the British High Commissioner to India John Freeman that Pakistan’s actions in Kutch could lead to a general war. More involved and concerned than the Americans (perhaps because it was only eighteen years since they had left the Indian subcontinent), the British quickly swung into action. On 28 April, less than forty-eight hours after Biar Bet had fallen, Britain’s Prime Minister Harold Wilson wrote to both Ayub Khan and India’s Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri and offered to mediate if both India and Pakistan agreed. He proposed an immediate ceasefire followed by restoration of status quo as obtained on 1 January 1965, followed by a negotiated settlement of the disputed portion of the border.

On 29 April, Prime Minister Shastri, speaking in the Parliament, accepted Wilson’s proposal but warned that if Pakistan continued to discard reason and persisted with its aggressive activities, the Indian Army would defend the country and would ‘decide its own strategy and employment of its manpower and equipment in the manner it deems best.’

The British High Commissioner to Pakistan Sir Morris James apparently spent 28 and 29 April trying to impress upon Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, then Pakistan’s foreign minister, and others in the foreign office the dangers of the Kutch skirmish escalating into a full-fledged war due to the anger among the Indian people.

By evening on 29 April, Ayub replied to Wilson but put forth a condition: any ceasefire must be followed by withdrawal of forces from the ‘disputed’ areas. Looking back, it was clearly a ploy to force India to accept that there existed a ‘dispute’ along the Kutch border. Wilson replied that Ayub should order immediate ceasefire for a week pending clarification from India. Morris James flew to Delhi on 30 April, met Prime Minister Shastri and convinced him that a peaceful solution was possible. Both Shastri and Ayub agreed to British mediation and a de facto

ceasefire was put in place.

The informal agreement meant Ayub ordered immediate halt to Operation Arrow Head. Bajwa claims Ayub's order 'astounded' Pakistan's Director Military Operations (DMO) Brigadier (later General) Gul Hasan. Brigadier Hasan later stated that he learnt of Ayub's orders from Major General Tikka Khan (GoC of 8 Division) – who was based along the border – rather than from the GHQ. In the opinion of many Pakistani officers of that time, had Operation Arrow Head gone ahead full steam, India's forces, trapped between Pakistan's 6 Brigade and 51 Brigade, would have been decimated. Gul Hasan wrote in *Memoirs*: 'If Pakistan had bagged the bulk of the invading force, which was within our grasp, I doubt they would have opposed us so confidently in Kashmir a little later.' However, Gul Hasan's assertion is based on a wrong assumption. He possibly did not take into account the increasing international pressure on Pakistan to halt its unprovoked aggression and the fact that India had started amassing its armour and artillery along the Punjab border.

Ayub, on the other hand, understood the full picture and realised that if he pushed Pakistani forces further into Indian territory, a full-fledged war was a distinct possibility. In addition to Harold Wilson's mediation, Ayub also came under pressure from the Americans. Bajwa writes: '(US Ambassador to Pakistan) McConaughy met Ayub to inform him that the United States was unhappy with the use of American aid equipment in the Rann of Kutch and later on the same day the Pakistan government learned from its ambassador in Washington that the US was officially, if privately, objecting to the fact that the US military equipment was being misused in a dispute between India and Pakistan.'

Meanwhile, on 1 May 1965 the GoC of Kilo Force, Major General OP Dunn, issued instructions to its formations not to undertake any offensive action, although patrolling by both sides would continue as before.

The fighting had clearly ceased and the long, hard road to patient diplomacy had begun.

The Negotiations and the Agreement

Once Harold Wilson got both Shastri and Ayub to agree to a ceasefire, it was now a matter of detail to work out a compromise on the border issue. Wilson deputed his two high commissioners – John Freeman in India and Morris James in Pakistan – to liaise with the respective governments. The British had a certain standing till then in the Indian subcontinent. The Commonwealth Office in London became the nerve centre for the negotiations. Freeman was in constant touch with the Indian Foreign Secretary CS Jha and James was interacting with Pakistan's Aziz Ahmed. The British also took care to keep Washington in the loop throughout the talks.

Despite the involvement of the two big powers, negotiations were not easy. On

4 May, the first draft of the British proposal was presented to both sides. Pakistan immediately rejected it. It said if India was to keep Chhad Bet, then Pakistan must get the right to keep its troops at Biar Bet.

After four to five days of detailed exchanges, a revised draft was put up to both sides. Pakistan promptly rejected it yet again, saying the draft did not make any reference to what constituted a dispute along the Kutch border. Ayub's team also had an objection to the arbitration process, which they felt was not 'tight' enough, according to Bajwa. However, there was a glimmer of hope. Ayub indicated he was prepared to drop the demand for a Pakistani post at Biar Bet.

Throughout May the proposals went back and forth, with each side objecting to minor points. The main obstacle was Pakistan's reluctance to withdraw forces to positions prior to 1 January 1965. India was no less adamant in its opposition to the proposal to refer the dispute to an international tribunal. There was no breakthrough in sight. June arrived without any visible progress in the talks. The Indians were showing their annoyance. BK Nehru, India's ambassador to Washington, was told by Lal Bahadur Shastri to communicate to the Americans that India was fast running out of patience and if diplomatic means did not succeed, India retained the option to use military means to resolve the issue. The Americans were apparently concerned enough to step up their efforts at the negotiations.

One reason could be President Ayub's letter to President Lyndon Johnson on 11 May 1965. It read, in parts:

My dear Mr Secretary,

I have received the following message from the President of Pakistan for transmission to the President of the United States:

Dear Mr President,

1. *I write to inform you of the grave situation that has arisen in the subcontinent as a result of India's aggressive actions in recent months: First, the forcible occupation of Pakistan's enclave of Dahagram, then an aggressive march into disputed territory of the Rann of Kutch and now concentration of virtually the entire striking power of the Indian armed forces on Pakistan borders. Dahagram was restored to us only after the Indians came to realise that their action was wholly untenable and it was impossible for them to continue to stay there; India's attempt to take over disputed Rann of Kutch territory by force was foiled only by counter-military measures which we, under the circumstances, were compelled to take, and, now, we too have had to deploy our forces in defensive positions on the India-Pakistan border to meet the threat that arises from India's latest action.*

2. *As you know, Kashmir has been the prime source of this conflict between India and Pakistan. Even as I write, reports are pouring in from Sri-*

nagar and other places in Indianoccupied Kashmir of wholesale arrests of Kashmiri leaders and firing by Indian forces on the unfortunate Kashmiri people, whose only crime is that they are struggling to free themselves of Indian military yoke and are protesting against the imprisonment by India for the third time of their leader Sheikh Abdullah. This is yet another instance of India's cynical disregard of the need for a peaceful settlement of her disputes with Pakistan on a just and honourable basis.

3. This same attitude is demonstrated by the Indian stand in regard to the Rann of Kutch dispute. Here again, as in the case of Kashmir, the Government of India now claims that the disputed territory is Indian territory. In actual fact, the dispute concerning this territory has been previously discussed between India and Pakistan on several occasions – the latest in 1960, when the two Governments agreed that pending further consideration of this dispute, neither side would disturb the status quo. India accuses Pakistan of aggression in the Rann of Kutch. In fact, it was India that moved large forces into the disputed territory during [the] months of January–April this year, established forward military posts therein and carried out full-scale land, sea and air manoeuvres in its vicinity, thus forcibly demolishing the status quo. It was only on April 8th when the Indian forces attacked a Pakistan outpost at Ding in an endeavour to complete a military takeover of the territory to present Pakistan with a fait accompli that the Pakistan forces went into action for the first time, and it was on April 19th, after patiently watching India's aggressive actions in the Rann of Kutch for three and a half months, that Pakistan forces went into the disputed territory for the first time. Subsequent military developments in the Rann are known to your Government.

4. Foiled in her attempt to seize the disputed territory by force, the Indian Prime Minister proceeded publicly to threaten Pakistan that India would attack Pakistan on other points of our border of her own choosing if we refused to accept [the] solution dictated by India. These were: a cease-fire and return to status quo ante, which meant that India would stay in possession of the disputed territory while we would have to clear out, and that the dispute would be settled only on the basis that the border needed to be demarcated and there was no territory in dispute. We could scarcely be expected to accept such a demand at the point of the gun.

5. Even in face of this, I have exercised the greatest restraint. On April 29th I stopped our troops in the Rann of Kutch from exploiting a favourable tactical situation when after the capture of Biar Bet they were in a position to cut right through to the Indian forces on the 24th parallel and destroy from the rear the two Indian Brigades located in the disputed territory.

Furthermore, on April 30th I unilaterally ordered our troops in the Rann of Kutch not to do anything that might aggravate the situation, which ultimately led to a de facto ceasefire there. All this was done in face of considerable opposition and in the hope India may thus be convinced of our sincere desire to settle disputes by the sensible method available, i.e., by peaceful means.

6. Following these truculent declarations, India has massed practically the entire Indian Army and Air Force, including all Indian armour, on Pakistan's borders in offensive formations. Pakistan has naturally had to deploy her own forces in defensive positions to meet this new threat. We have also informed the Security Council of the threat to peace that has thus arisen in this region.

7. The armies of Pakistan and India now stand poised against each other. The situation is one of the utmost gravity. A trial of armed strength between India and Pakistan will be a war without frontiers. It could engulf the entire six hundred million people of this subcontinent with all its terrible consequences. But we trust that even at this late hour it may be possible for the Indian leaders to pause and consider where India's true interests lie and that she may refrain from seeking a military decision.

8. As you know, Mr President, we have time and again warned your Government that arming of India by the US on the scale on which it has proceeded during the last two years could only lead to situations such as the present, that India would be encouraged to settle her disputes with Pakistan by force, that she was building two armies—one allegedly to fight the Chinese and the other to contain Pakistan—but that when she found a suitable opportunity she would employ both these armies against Pakistan. Your Government continued to believe that India had no such aggressive intentions, and has continued to arm India even though the Chinese military threat has admittedly receded. While defending this policy, spokesmen of your Government have time and again reminded us of American assurances to come to our assistance in the event of aggression. At one time, Mr Harriman even expressed surprise to our Ambassador that Pakistan should not have been satisfied with those assurances. That India should have followed her aggressive actions in the Rann of Kutch by proceeding to mass against Pakistan practically her entire army—and a large part of forces allegedly facing China—regardless of your diplomatic persuasions to the contrary, and that the two countries should now be on the brink of war confirms fears we have repeatedly expressed about the unwisdom of arming an aggressive and unreliable India.

9. Explaining the explosive situation arising out of the massing of In-

dian troops on our borders, we have suggested to your Ambassador that your Government consider reminding Mr Shastri of the existence of American assurances in the event of aggression against Pakistan, in the hope that such a reminder may help to deter Mr Shastri and the other fireeating Indian leaders from involving the subcontinent in a war which could do irreparable damage to the cause of freedom and peace in this region.

With warm personal regards,

Yours sincerely,

Mohammad Ayub Khan.

India, aware of Ayub's proclivity to play the victim, had already told the British and the Americans that if the negotiations failed, India would have to keep all its options open.

It so happened that on 15 June, both Shastri and Ayub were in London to attend the Commonwealth summit. Wilson met Shastri on 15 June. Shastri made it clear that India would not go beyond the latest proposal submitted on 12 May and also declined a direct meeting between himself and Ayub, saying he doubted the value of such a meeting. The Indian prime minister said he preferred the indirect method of negotiations under the aegis of the two British high commissioners. Shastri may have appeared to be soft-spoken and diminutive but he was a resolute man. He told Prime Minister Wilson that India would not agree to a single document comprising the resolution of the Kutch issue as well as the withdrawal of the Indian forces from the Punjab border. Wilson got the message.

The next day, the Pakistani delegation met the British prime minister. Ayub complained about India's obduracy on the patrolling issue and said there was little sense in the negotiations if the issue of patrolling was not included in the arbitration process. Bajwa quotes British papers that speak about Ayub's constant carping over India's mobilisation of forces in Kashmir and the Punjab border. 'Ayub said he was even prepared to meet Shastri, even though he "disliked and despised him",' Bajwa writes.

There is an interesting passage in Bajwa's book. He writes about the Wilson–Ayub meeting in London in some detail. 'Ayub then produced another map which claimed that Indian forces in the ICK (Indian-controlled Kashmir) were now up to seven divisions including armoured and mountain divisions—the latter equipped with British and American weapons.

'Wilson said it was his impression that Shastri might be willing to move Indian forces back to positions before the recent outbreak of fighting in Kutch and wanted to know if Ayub was willing to give such an undertaking in principle. Ayub said that he was, although he believed that the Indians "would try to cheat"... and he believed that "all Indians were dishonest rascals".'

Despite such obstacles and rancour, an agreement was finally hammered out

and signed on 30 June 1965.

The main features of the pact (*see [Appendix 1](#) for the full text*) were:

- Restoration of the status quo as on 1 January 1965 in the Gujarat–West Pakistan border.
- All troops on both sides would withdraw within seven days.
- Indian police could occupy the post at Chhad Bet in the same strength as on 31 December 1964.
- Indian and Pakistani police could patrol on the tracks on which they were patrolling prior to 1 January 1965.

Thus ended the short skirmish on the Kutch border. However, as events were to prove less than six months later, Pakistan was just testing India's resolve and preparedness. Its main objective was wresting Kashmir from India. Kutch was only a diversionary move, an opening gambit on Pakistan's part.

The main move came in August, but before that Pakistan launched another probing move, this time in Kargil.

The Battle that Changed the Momentum

Morale Booster in Kargil

Kargil. For the current generation of Indians, the very mention of this place evokes images of the 1999 skirmish between India and Pakistan and the war that directly reached Indian drawing rooms, thanks to extensive coverage by the media, particularly the newly formed television news channels at the turn of the century. For the past sixteen years since 1999, every year 26 July has been celebrated as Vijay Diwas to commemorate the hard-fought victory of the Indian Army over the intruding Pakistani forces. The battles of Tiger Hill, Tololing, Three Pimples and Munto Dhalo are still fresh in people's minds, as are names like Vikram Batra, Manoj Pandey, Sanjay Kumar, Yogendra Yadav, who were the heroes of the war and received Param Vir Chakras.

That Kargil town was witness to another incredible battle almost 34 years before the 1999 conflict would perhaps surprise many. The fact is that in May 1965, even as India and Pakistan were negotiating peace along the Kutch border, trouble was brewing in Kargil, at Point 13620 to be precise. This Point overlooks National Highway 1A connecting Srinagar to Leh, the district headquarter of Ladakh.

Well-entrenched Pakistani troops at Point 13620 were constantly threatening the highway by targeting vehicular traffic plying through it. The firing from the location was part of the overall plan that the Pakistani Army had followed since December 1964. All across the ceasefire line (the old line agreed to in 1949; renamed as line of control, or LoC, post the 1971 war), the Pakistani Army was engaging in intrusions, ceasefire violations and attacks on bridges and posts. Newspaper reports of the time suggest that Pakistan had, in December 1964, started to frequently target Poonch, Chammb, Keran, Tithwal and Kargil areas, built new bunkers and brought in reinforcements. The Indian Army was troubled in particular by the prospect of being immobilised on NH 1A due to the dominant position of Pakistani troops on Point 13620. But before we get to the actual counter-offensive launched by India in May 1965, a little peek into the situation prevailing in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) in 1964–65 is necessary.



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Two events helped Pakistan foment trouble in Kashmir in that period. One was the theft of the Holy Relic (a strand of hair believed to be of the Prophet from Hazratbal Shrine in Srinagar). On 27 December 1964, Muslims all over the Kashmir Valley poured out on the streets to protest against the theft—an act of sacrilege

in their eyes. Pakistan, always waiting to fish in troubled waters, accused India of engineering the theft of the Holy Relic in order to humiliate the Muslims in Kashmir. It gave a call for 'jihad' against the 'Hindu' rulers of India. People were exhorted to rise against the Indian rulers and 'throw away the chains of slavery forever.' They were assured full support of the Muslim world and Pakistan in particular. As authorities searched high and low for the Holy Relic, the Valley remained in turmoil for a week or so. Fortunately, the government managed to recover the stolen Holy Relic and restored it to the Hazratbal Shrine. Not to be deterred, Pakistan kept up the propaganda and insisted that the recovered strand of hair was a fake. Violence again erupted in the Valley, instigated by anti-Indian elements. However, a semblance of normalcy was restored after clerics certified that the relic was indeed genuine.

The second trigger for trouble was the internment of the leader of National Conference Sheikh Abdullah (father of Farooq Abdullah [chief minister of J&K in 1982–84, 1986–90, 1996–2002] and grandfather of Omar Abdullah [chief minister of J&K in 2009–15]). His imprisonment gave Pakistan another chance to launch an international campaign that spoke of 'a grave situation' in Kashmir and suppression of people in the state by the ruthless rulers from Delhi. The people, however, by and large ignored the instigation, much to Pakistan's dismay.

On the other side, President Ayub's cabinet and especially Foreign Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto were not willing to give up their plan to create trouble in Kashmir. They had their reasons, of course. In Bhutto's assessment, this was the best period to wrest back Kashmir from India.

The opportunity would vanish once the expansion and reorganisation of the Indian Army was complete in the next few years. Now was an opportune time, Bhutto felt, since India was badly shaken by multiple factors: its humiliating defeat in the 1962 war with China, Jawaharlal Nehru's death, his successor Lal Bahadur Shastri's perceived ineffectualness, an acute food shortage engulfing India, and the start of a virulent anti-Hindi agitation in South India. Bhutto's logic did appear persuasive. According to Bajwa, Bhutto told his biographer Salman Taseer: 'I wrote to Ayub Khan saying that if he wanted to pursue a policy of confrontation with India, time was running out. We had to act now or it was late.'

So, even as the topmost decision-makers in Pakistan discussed and debated the ways to wrest Kashmir from India, the Pakistani Army stepped up their ceasefire violations and attacks in January 1965. SN Prasad and UP Thapliyal in their book, *The India- Pakistan War of 1965: A History*, claim that as many as 1,347 ceasefire violations took place between January and May 1965 as against 522 in the corresponding period the previous year.

It was against this backdrop that 121 Independent Brigade Group, headquartered in Kargil, was faced with the task of silencing the Pakistani guns, which are

normally located behind at depth areas, by capturing infantry positions which serve as bases to direct the fire, on the utterly dominating heights of Point 13620.

Kargil, it should be noted, is located at an altitude of 8,000 feet. The 121 Brigade had been located in the mountain ranges in this sector with altitudes ranging from 8,000 feet to 20,000 feet. Being part of the cold desert area, these features are bare and devoid of any flora. The mountain spurs are narrow and steep. The ground configuration favours the defender, whereas the rugged and sharp climb is extremely cumbersome for the attacker.

In 1965, 4 Rajput battalion – who had won the battle honour for Zoji La in November 1948 for helping secure the pass at Dras, just 64 km from Kargil – was the only infantry battalion available to 121 Brigade Group. According to Colonel Ranbir Singh (retired), who was a young captain in 1965, this battalion had already made its name in 1948. The then CO of 4 Rajput Colonel Girdhari Singh, MC (military cross) and Bar, was awarded Vir Chakra for the Dras battle in 1948. Colonel Ranbir's father Brigadier Sukhdev Singh, MC, CO of 1 Patiala, also won a Vir Chakra for the Zoji La operations in 1948.

As Colonel Ranbir recalls, in 1965 the river Shingo gurgling through Kargil town separated the 121 Brigade headquarters (HQ) and the 4 Rajput HQ.

In May that year, Brigadier VK Ghai was the commander of 121 Brigade, which directly reported to HQ 15 Corps located in Srinagar. 'Lieutenant Colonel Sudarshan Singh, a smart Sardar, all of 6 feet 2 inches, had taken over the command of the Fourth from the spirited Colonel KPP Nair around 10 May 1965,' Colonel Ranbir Singh recalls half a century later, his memory still sharp. 'Lieutenant Colonel (later major general) KS Bajwa, matching Lieutenant Colonel Sudarshan's height, was commanding the 85 Light Regiment located in Kargil. The regiment had only one battery with 6×4.2 inches mortars having a limited range of 4,100 yards,' Colonel Ranbir remembers. The second battery, he says, arrived all the way from Pathankot on 16 May and was deployed at Harka Bahadur Bridge, adjacent to the river Shingo flowing from Pakistan and merging into the river Indus. 'This artillery regiment was only a year old in Kargil and was itching to draw first blood. But in early May, there was no sign of any tension in the sector. All activity was normal and routine,' Colonel Ranbir recalls now.

The year 1965 was also a time when the Indian Army was still smarting from their humiliating defeat by China in North- East Frontier Agency (NEFA). And as if to add insult to injury, in a surprise initiative in April of 1965, Pakistan captured a portion of Indian territory in Kutch sector of Gujarat. 'The Indian Government may have decided to tackle this (the loss of territory in Kutch) diplomatically, but we in the army were decidedly unhappy. Such situations demoralise the army. There was an undercurrent of resentment as well as determination amongst us that the Kutch slur must be avenged. There often used to be a lot of discussions on

where and what should be the target,’ Colonel Ranbir says.

Reminiscing about those months, he further states: ‘We cannot predict destiny—at best it can only be conjectured. Delay is a known cause of bitterness leading to reservations at lower levels. The million-dollar question doing the rounds in the fauj that time was: will the government do the honours or will it be up to the army to steal the thunder by taking the all-important command decision to even the score with Pakistan, who was basking in the recent Kutch glory? And lo and behold, such an opportunity presented itself out of the blue to our commander Brigadier Ghai in May 1965. This hitherto peaceful sector had seen some tense moments in April and May with increasing exchange of fire.’

Another fellow officer of 4 Rajput, Brigadier DP Nayar (then a major), has a distinct memory of how 121 Brigade conceived the plan to recapture Point 13620 and what prompted them. ‘It was perhaps 12 May 1965. The Brigade commander had convened a conference at the HQ. The agenda of the conference was practically anyone’s guess. It started with the Brigade commander reading out contents of the Western Army commander’s (Lieutenant General Harbaksh Singh) DO (demi-official) letter, which he had received perhaps a day or two earlier. The Army commander in his DO letter had reviewed the recently concluded operational skirmishes with the Pakistanis in the Rann of Kutch and also commented that they (the Pakis) were continuing with their belligerent attitude. If I recollect accurately, General Harbaksh in his letter to the commander had spoken about cultivating a more aggressive spirit in our troops. He had also remarked, rather pointedly I thought, “has the martial blood in the veins of Indian Army soldiers dried up?”, or words to that effect,’ Brigadier Nayar recalls.

Colonel Ranbir Singh concurs: ‘The Brigade commander, after reading out the contents of the DO letter, paused for a while and then addressing the CO, 4 Rajput, said, “reading between the lines of Army commander’s DO letter, I know what he expects from me”.’ Brigadier Ghai had earlier served under General Harbaksh and both Brigadier Nayar and Colonel Ranbir thought that the two (General Harbaksh and Brigadier Ghai) had already spoken about the possibility of capturing Point 13620.

As Colonel Ranbir recalls: ‘After reading out the letter and declaring what he thought was on the Army commander’s mind, the Brigade commander declared that 4 Rajput would attack and capture Point 13620 as well as Black Rocks on the night of 13– 14 May 1965. This decision breathed new life in[to] the Brigade and 4 Rajput. The Brigade commander was immediately assured by CO 4 Rajput and all others present that the task would be accomplished as desired.’

During the discussion, Major Nayar, who was also the second in command of 4 Rajput, raised a couple of queries. He narrates: ‘With the approval of my CO, I ventured to ask if we could also be provided with greater information on the con-

figuration of the ground behind the enemy forward defence lines (FDLs) and more accurate details of his deployments, since what was known to us so far was based on what we could see directly or had been conveyed to us through intelligence reports, or was based on the inputs given to us by the locals.'

Brigadier Nayar goes on to explain why he ventured to raise the queries: 'The Brigade commander and myself were, during a previous period, instructors together at the tactical wing (JC/SO courses) of the then Infantry School, Mhow, later established as College of Combat and still later renamed Army War College. Hence, we already had a personal rapport. He welcomed my queries. A short discussion ensued and accepting my request the Brigade commander postponed the D-day to 16 May 1965, and also allowed us to send our reconnaissance party in areas behind the enemy lines.'

Brigadier Nayar adds: 'My query seeking greater information was also prompted by the fact that till then the maps available to us were only of 1/4 inches to a mile scale. There were no aerial photos available either. The information regarding terrain and the enemy rested on what we could see for ourselves from the FDLs or was provided through study of intercepts and inputs by the locals. From the tactical point of view, this information was not sufficient to conduct an offensive operation.'

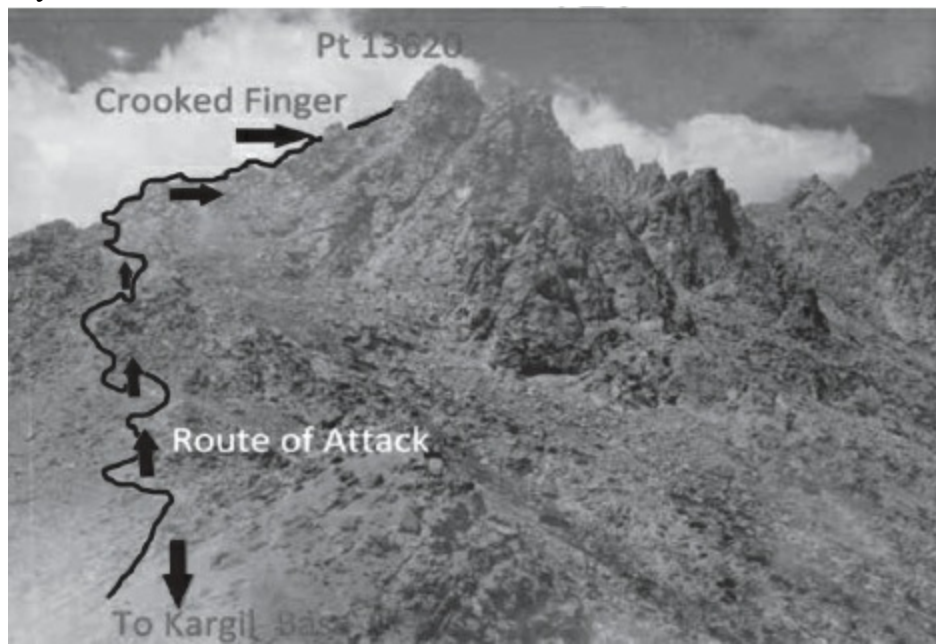
The Brigade commander's acceptance of a junior's suggestion is typical of a good leader's trait. Half a century later, Colonel Ranbir cannot stop admiring Brigadier Ghai. 'He (Brigadier Ghai) deserves high praise for his grit, determination and boldness, all qualities expected of a true commander. By taking the all-important command decision to capture Point 13620, he became an instant hero. It is also true that if the decision had boomeranged, no one would have stood by him. Such are the vagaries and spoils of war,' Colonel Ranbir reflects.

The Orders

As the conference got over, Brigadier Ghai issued orders to Colonel Sudarshan Singh, CO 4 Rajput, and Colonel KS Bajwa, CO 85 Light Regiment, to capture Pakistan Post Point 13620 and Black Rocks by 0500 hours on 17 May 1965. Brigadier Ghai told them that it had to be a silent attack. He ordered 85 Light Regiment, the artillery unit, to provide support on call. The enemy was an understrength company at Point 13620 with sections of 3-inch mortars each and MMGs, besides their authorised weapons. Another under-strength platoon was defending Black Rocks supported by the usual authorised weapons.

After the conference at the Brigade level, both Colonel Sudarshan and Colonel Bajwa came to the 4 Rajput HQ to work out further modalities of the attack. As Colonel Ranbir remembers, the staff and the troops were bemused. In his words, 'No one knew exactly what had transpired at the Brigade headquarters and what the artillery CO was doing in Colonel Sudarshan's office. Of course, being of same

seniority, they knew each other.'



The route taken from Kargil base by Bravo and Charlie companies of 4 Rajput battalion for the assault and capture of Point 13620

During an in-depth discussion, Colonel Sudarshan and Colonel Bajwa coordinated artillery fire and formulated the attack plan. Since Colonel Surdarshan had just taken over the unit, he did not know the other officers well enough. Both Colonel Ranbir and Brigadier Nayar recall that Colonel Sudarshan summoned the commanders of Alfa and Bravo companies for a discussion. Brigadier Nayar (then a major) was commanding Alfa Company, while Major Baljit Singh Randhawa headed Bravo Company.

The CO ordered Major Randhawa's company to attack and capture Point 13620 by 0500 hours on 17 May 1965. Charlie Company commanded by Major Bikram Singh Chhetri was to be his reserve. He was told to do a recce on a south-west approach from the Harka Bahadur flank. Detailed orders were to be given after the recce report.

Discussion done, Major Randhawa and Major Nayar set off for their respective company areas and got down to their jobs. Brigadier Nayar recalls: 'Since both the assaulting companies were deployed on own FDLs, we were to be relieved and readjustment of defences undertaken. All this also needed time and careful planning. Since maintenance of surprise and stealth was of paramount importance for conduct of the operations, every move and action had to be planned in a very meticulous manner. And it is to the credit of our boys that the enemy did not get wind of our movement or plans until we launched the assault.'

That said, in a war there is always some unexpected development. Colonel Ranbir recalls: 'From Kargil town, where we were located, the snow on the massive Pakistani feature was not visible, as it was in the reverse depression. However,

there was plenty of snow in the selected FUP (forming-up place) and around. It was going to be a difficult task for the assaulting parties. The unexpected discovery, however, did not deter the troops or the officers.'

A Special Request

In war as in life, fate plays a major part. Colonel Ranbir, though not part of the Bravo Company, went on to be part of the attack on Point 13620, thanks to an old, unwritten pact he had made with Major Randhawa. Coming out of the CO's office, Major Randhawa reminded Colonel Ranbir (then a captain) of their old resolve of fighting alongside in the eventuality of a war. Both knew each other well and there was mutual trust.

"What are you waiting for? Go, tell the CO," I told Randhawa. But the CO refused. Then I went to the CO myself and asked him to allow me to be the leading platoon commander for the attack. The CO again refused, saying that I did not belong to Bravo Company. Luckily, CO 85 Light Regiment was present at 4 Rajput CO's office and he intervened, requesting Colonel Sudarshan to permit me since I had volunteered. The CO relented and that's how I got included in the Bravo Company for the assault on Point 13620,' Colonel Ranbir recounts with a glint in his eyes.

In fact, Major General KS Bajwa, the artillery unit CO at that time, has mentioned this incident in the many articles he has written since then on the 1965 Kargil battle. Interestingly, a similar request by Captain Upkar Singh Ahluwalia to be accepted as a volunteer for the attack was turned down by the CO since he was holding Delta Company defences in the Harka Bahadur sector.

The Preparation and the Assault

On the morning of 16 May, Major Randhawa along with key officers and JCOs went up to the Crooked Finger area in twos and threes. All of them saw for themselves the enemy defences from behind big boulders. They saw the Pakistani soldiers relaxing in the sun, and smoke coming out from their *langar* (kitchen). The CO himself had a look at the layout. There was plenty of snow in the selected FUP where the attacking companies were to deploy before the attack. From the FUP the climb up to the highest point was almost vertical, with huge boulders and a linear frontage. It meant that even a platoon with two sections up could not move in the restricted area. Congestion of troops at any point would mean an easy target for the enemy and more casualties for the attacker. The perimeter wall of stones around the Pakistani defences was five feet high.

After a thorough look at the terrain and the enemy post, most of the troops and officers returned to base (Post No. 8) leaving behind Lieutenant Chattopadhyay with an under-strength platoon to keep the enemy post under surveillance and later mark the FUP by 0200 hours. This was about 300 metres from the enemy perimeter wall. The young and brave Lieutenant Chattopadhyay did a splendid job of

keeping a hawk's eye on the adversary throughout the night. (He was to die in an encounter with raiders in Pattan near Srinagar in August that year.)

The patrols returned to the base on schedule and were debriefed. The information obtained on both sides was an eye-opener. The original plan of attack was shelved and a new plan formed. The CO decided that the attack would be from behind the enemy lines and the operation based upon an element of surprise.

The Plan

The plan (see [map 3](#)) was as follows:

- 4 Rajput to attack and capture Point 13620 and Black Rocks in two phases
 - Phase 1: B Company, with C Company in reserve, to capture Point 13620 along west spur and from the rear of the objective
 - Phase 2: A Company to capture Black Rocks complex by attacking the enemy from the rear, with D Company less one platoon in reserve
 - Artillery and mortar fire to be on call; only silent registration of targets permitted
 - Phase 1 of the attack to be completed by 0500 hours 17 May (first light)
 - Phase 2 to commence on completion of Phase 1 or as per dictates of the tactical situation
 - Complete wireless silence to be observed
 - H-hour – 0200 hours 17 May 1965

Move to Forming-up Place

The scene was now all set for the final assault.

The attacking troops started from Post 8 at 2000 hours. The climb was extremely arduous since the troops were also carrying the heavier company weapons.

As the company moved up in strength, they had an unusual companion – pet dog Kalu. ‘Some soldiers tried to shoo him away, but Kalu wouldn't listen,’ Colonel Ranbir remembers distinctly. ‘He kept moving with us despite many of our boys telling him to go back.’

Climbing up, the boys had to be careful. There were plenty of loose stones on the slope. They sometimes had to move on all fours to avoid falling down. ‘All of us had to be extra careful not to make any noise,’ Colonel Ranbir informs. As planned, Lieutenant Chattopadhyay and his team had marked the FUP and assisted the troops to deploy there. The time was now 0200 hours on 17 May 1965.

‘It was bitterly cold on the snow. My platoon was ready to mount the attack. In the other platoons, lieutenants Vijay Aggarwal and Bhagrawat were also in position behind the leading platoon. Charlie Company with Major Bikram Singh Chhetri sat poised behind us as reserve. The enemy post and the perimeter wall were distinctly visible in the moonlight. It was impossible to believe that the

enemy had not heard the noise or seen us in our olive-green uniform, which stood out in stark contrast on the pristine white snow. Why, even the moonlight reflection from the metal parts of the weapons could have given away our presence,’ Colonel Ranbir says, his eyes withdrawing into the past, perhaps once again conjuring up in his mind the scene on the mountain half a century ago.

‘At 0200, with snow everywhere, it was annoyingly cold and holding weapons was getting painful, with skin freezing on the metal parts. To lessen the cold, I had told the men to put two Patiala pegs [about twice as long as the normal shot glass] of rum in their water bottles. By 0200 hours, after the rigorous climb and a swig of rum, they were raring to have a go at the enemy, who was not very far away,’ recalls Colonel Ranbir.

The Attack: A Real Test of Nerves and Leadership

Colonel Ranbir distinctly remembers the next phase, the actual attack. He narrates: ‘At 0200 hours, the leading troops crossed the start line. Surprisingly, there was no fire from the enemy as the boys laboriously ploughed through snow and rocky area for over 150 metres. Then all hell broke loose as the first troops came under intense fire. The volume of fire was so heavy that the troops took to the ground. Clearly, the enemy had known of our presence and was lying in wait.’

‘It also showed good training on the part of the Pakistani soldiers, who did not open fire from far. They patiently waited for us to get near and then fired for effect. At our end, despite the heavy fire, leaders at all levels pushed their men forward through the rocky terrain. It was important to sustain the momentum of the attack since we had suffered casualties and any halt in the movement would have been disastrous. The enemy had opened up with light and medium machine guns. They also used 2 inch and 3 inch mortars. Down below, at the Kargil base, our comrades watched the splash of mortars and the flash of weapon’s fire. To them, it resembled a huge Diwali-type firecracker show. Both sides kept up the firing as we Rajputs closed in on the enemy perimeter wall,’ Colonel Ranbir, the man in charge of the leading assault platoon, recalls five decades later. The fight was far from over though.

‘It was already more than an hour after the attack had begun. We had crossed the perimeter wall and an intense hand-to-hand fight had commenced. Amidst the deafening noise of fire from both sides, the brave Rajputs forged ahead undaunted. An LMG firing from a bunker was hindering our momentum. I moved towards it along with two men to try and silence the gun, but the firing was too accurate to allow any movement. We nevertheless charged ahead. Havaladar Om Parkash was killed inside the enemy bunker and I was wounded, with blood oozing out from the side of my head. I fell unconscious for some time. In the meantime, our Company Commander Major Randhawa had moved up to encourage the men to advance with speed. Seeing my wound he asked me to move back, but I kept on moving with my

platoon,' Colonel Ranbir describes, the entire fight on Point 13620 playing out in his mind as if it happened yesterday.

He continues, 'And yet, it is difficult to fully describe the scene. Had the hand-to-hand combat been filmed, it would look like a scene straight out of movies like *To Hell and Back* and *Haqeeqat*. It was a do-or-die situation. The enemy was not comfortable with the progress we had made. The entire area reverberated with war cries of "Bol Bajrang Bali ki Jai" and "Allah Hu Akbar". The surcharged atmosphere heightened our determination to succeed at all cost. Many of our boys had fallen, several others were wounded. Charlie Company, which was our back-up, was straining at the leash. The men were marking time to join the battle but they were held back for an appropriate moment. Some of them, however, could not restrain themselves and joined the battle in their enthusiasm. Sepoy Budh Singh of Charlie Company saw Naib Subedar Girdhari Lal of Bravo Company moving toward an LMG, which was causing havoc. Budh Singh could not restrain himself and rushed to join Girdhari Lal. Both charged at the LMG, killing the enemy and destroying the gun position. While brave Girdhari Lal fell dead, Budh Singh miraculously survived. Their bravery was rewarded with the gallantry award of Vir Chakra.'

The night's tale continues in the words of Colonel Ranbir: 'Nearly two hours had elapsed since we launched the attack. Sensing that daylight was not far, Major Baljit Randhawa took it upon himself to accelerate the attack. He was displaying leadership and bravery of a rare order. He was moving from bunker to bunker with his men, seeking out the enemy, encouraging his men to finish off the battle as quickly as possible. Major Randhawa, the fearless man that he was, moved into another bunker, alone this time. As he entered, he came face to face with a Pakistani JCO. Both instinctively fired at each other. The Pakistani died instantly but the burst from his Sten gun hit Major Randhawa smack in the chest, grievously wounding him. As some of us reached by his side, Major Randhawa was more concerned about the outcome of the attack and the safety of his troops. He kept encouraging the men to go ahead with speed. The Company JCO Subedar Bahadur Singh was doing a commendable job of keeping the men enthused. We were losing the Company commander though. Life slowly ebbed out of him right in front of our eyes, and we could not do anything to save him.'

The Final Phase

The time was now 0415 hours and at 14,000 feet, daylight was fast approaching. Lieutenants Aggarwal and Bhagrawat, leading their respective platoons, had meanwhile moved up with speed and were embroiled in hand-to-hand scuffles with the enemy. An enemy bullet wounded Lieutenant Aggarwal in the thigh. Unmindful, he kept advancing with his platoon.

'Meanwhile, our Commanding Officer Colonel Sudarshan Singh too had

moved right up to the peak. He had picked up a dead man's LMG and came forward firing from it. Seeing him, I broke the news about Major Randhawa's martyrdom. If he was shaken by the revelation, Colonel Sudarshan did not show it. All that he said to me was "casualties take place in battle". He told me to take over and complete the last phase of attack with aggressive speed. So encouraged, we spartan Rajputs rushed forward towards the highest point. The enemy was by now very jittery, unnerved and demoralised. They had already lost ten men and scores were wounded. Fearing certain death of all remaining men, the Pakistani troops panicked and rolled down the steep reverse slopes to safety. Seeing the complete enemy exodus, the brave Rajputs rushed through the last phase while firing at the running enemy. It was 0450 hours on 17 May 1965. Daylight had emerged and the Rajputs had completed the capture of Point 13620 with missionary zeal,' Colonel Ranbir recounts with justifiable pride.

The Capture of Black Rocks

Meanwhile, Alfa Company under the dynamic leadership of Major DP Nayar were moving towards their task from the right flank. The going was equally tough, but the brave Rajputs overcame the odds and reached their FUP on time. Before commencing the attack on Black Rocks, Major Nayar (later brigadier) had made a lot of preparation. He recalls: 'It was very clear that time was at a great premium and there could be no repeats. It meant that whatever information was to be gathered with regard to the enemy or the terrain had to be done in the first go itself. I therefore decided to beef up the strength of the patrol. The patrol was divided into two groups. Group I was led by me and consisted of my company officer Captain SN Bhatnagar and four other selected non-commissioned officers (NCOs)/other ranks (ORs), who were to go up to the viewpoint and as close to the enemy as possible. Group II comprised Subedar Rajender Singh and ten havaldars/lance havaldars and jawans. Their role was to do a recce and memorise the route for guiding the main body of the Company from existing location to the concentration area and as far forward as possible up to the FUP. There were no regular routes or tracks on the ground and all movement had to be over boulders strewn across rugged, high-altitude mountainous territory, with the night temperature falling to almost below freezing point.

'Those days, other than normal army-issue gloves and highaltitude woollens, no other special equipment were available to ward off the extreme cold. In the concentration area, we could not have lit any fire even if it was desirable. The level of hazards that the troops had to go through can be imagined. Yet, our troops were so hardy that they never ever complained and went about their tasks with admirable commitment. The steps taken by Group II proved most helpful for the move into the concentration area and thereafter to the FUP, the route for which was wholly through enemy-controlled territory.

‘Group I reached their selected viewpoint around 0230 hours on the night of 13–14 May. We were totally surprised to see that Black Rocks had two more knolls behind it with a bowl/trough type of ground between them and the rear of the Black Rocks proper. These areas were subsequently named as Peak 1 and Peak 2, and the Bowl. The Bowl measured approximately 100×75 yards. Additionally, the area was found to be completely covered with snow, something that we had not seen from our defended areas. I had carried a camera along and took a few snaps of the area to study it further.

‘It was a moonlit night and the visibility was quite good. From the selected viewpoint, I decided to further sub-divide my patrol. I, along with the two ORs, went to my left side (eastern flank) to see the configuration of the land and the spread of the objective including the Black Rocks. The other sub-group under Captain SN Bhatnagar was sent towards Peak 1 to study the ground and observe the enemy’s deployment in that area. On reaching his viewpoint, Captain Bhatnagar intuitively fired from his rifle with a view to inviting a reaction from the enemy. This act attracted the enemy’s attention from Peak 1 and, though very lousily, they went into their stand-to positions. In that, Bhatnagar was able to pinpoint enemy deployment on Peak 1. On the Black Rocks side, clear signs of trenches and bunkers around the edge of the Bowl were observed, confirming the earlier suspicion that these areas were covered by their firing positions. In addition, the slope from the eastern side was observed to be extremely steep and rugged in character, and it could only be negotiated in twos and threes.’

As the D-day and H-hour arrived, Alfa Company left for its concentration/FUP areas as per plans and reached the launching pad well on schedule.

Brigadier Nayar remembers: ‘When I had reached my area of the FUP, I heard gunshot fire from the direction of Point 13620. The straight conclusion was that contact of B Company with the enemy had been established and perhaps the battle royal had started. Concluding that the surprise for obvious reasons had already been lost and there was no point for me to hold on, I directed Second Lieutenant Harbhagwant Singh Dhillon, commander of No. 1 Platoon, to rush and capture Peak 1. Going over the boulders and snow was tough. The enemy had also spotted our move and brought down LMG-cum-rifle fire on Harbhagwant’s troops. Braving all odds imposed by the rugged terrain, snow and enemy fire, No. 1 Platoon gallantly kept advancing from boulder to boulder, firing mostly from the hips in groups of two to three men. Naik Sapater Singh, one of the section commanders, along with his men pounced on the enemy’s LMG position and rendered it ineffective. The platoon’s action demoralised the enemy so much that they left behind their weapons and ammunition and fled from Peak 1 by rolling down the reverse slope of their position. Peak 1 came under our control in no time.

‘Simultaneously, No. 2 Platoon under Commander Subedar Ranjit Singh was

pressed into action to capture Peak 2. Adopting the same tactics as was done by No. 1 Platoon, they secured Peak 2. We were now poised to launch the attack on Black Rocks proper. As planned, I ordered Captain SN Bhatnagar with the No. 3 Platoon to go for Black Rocks beefed up with two sections from No. 2 Platoon. To accomplish this task, the troops had to go through the Bowl. On entering the area and having gone about ten to fifteen yards, we unexpectedly encountered knee-deep soft snow and found the movement through it most laborious and tedious. In the meantime, the enemy had spotted our move from the Black Rocks and opened up his firearms including automatics, which were sighted in the trenches during the reconnaissance. Since my troops were getting bogged down in the snow, we were sitting ducks. Apprehending heavy casualties to own troops if we kept on pressing forward over the same area, I stalled the move further through the Bowl and directed No. 3 Platoon under Captain Bhatnagar to outflank Black Rocks from the left, with Harbhagwant to keep engaging enemy from Peak 1. When this manoeuvre was taking place, the intensity of enemy fire became still heavier. They had to be silenced and so I called for mortar and artillery fire.

‘At first, the instruction was declined due to close proximity of my own location to the target and our being within the beating zone of the weapon. However, at my specific call, the artillery fire was brought down on the enemy post. The salvos came in quick succession and fell on the target including the Bowl area. One of the salvos fell dead on top of the Black Rocks position and it totally pulverised the enemy and reduced the intensity of fire by a large extent. Sporadic fire continued. The outflanking move had to proceed over extremely tough terrain, but Bhatnagar pressed on relentlessly and assaulted the objective successfully and secured it. On noticing the outflanking move and continuous effective engagement from peaks 1 and 2, the enemy in a demoralised and disorganised state beat a hasty retreat along the reverse slopes into the valley down below, leaving behind five rifles, a lot of ammunition, rations and other warlike stores. The Black Rocks area was thus fully captured.’

The next task was to consolidate the capture of Black Rocks. Says Brigadier Nayar: ‘I diverted my attention to clear Saddle, which was between Black Rocks and Point 13620. Subedar Ranjit Singh with two sections was sent to clear the objective. However, the enemy had by then vacated the area. Looking back, the outflanking move, despite the extra time it took, saved us many definite casualties or perhaps even a bloodbath, which would have been the case had I bullheadedly pressed on with the attack through the Bowl. We suffered only three walking-wounded casualties. For our leadership and drive, three mentioned-indispaches for gallantry were awarded to Captain SN Bhatnagar, Subedar Rajender Singh and me.’

In contrast, the fight for Point 13620 had taken a heavy toll. The enemy left be-

hind ten dead. They were able to roll down their wounded on the sharp reverse slopes. The Rajputs lost their brave and dynamic commander Major Baljit Singh Randhawa. They also lost one JCO and thirteen ORs. Those wounded in action included Captain Ranbir Singh, Lieutenant VK Aggarwal and 50 ORs.

Captain Ranbir Singh was at once made the Company commander.

The Victory Signal

The Indian tricolour was hoisted at the highest point and those at the Kargil base saw it fluttering in glory through their binoculars. As per procedure, a Verey pistol was fired with flares highlighting the flag's colour sequence to announce and signal the success to all concerned. The news of the victory was conveyed to the commander on telephone.

It must be mentioned here that the signal platoon had done a remarkable job of continuously laying telephone lines consistent with the speed of the attack. The moment a feature was captured, the telephone line was put through to the Brigade headquarters via 4 Rajput base exchange.

The unit was awarded with theatre honour. Four awards were conferred upon 4 Rajput. Major Randhawa MVC (posthumous), Captain Ranbir Singh, Naib Subedar Girdhari Lal and Sepoy Budh Singh were awarded Vir Chakra for their bravery. Brigadier VK Ghai was awarded the Vishist Seva Medal.

In the middle of all this was Kalu – the pet who proved to be a lucky mascot. He had kept marching with the troops and remained most disciplined. He did not bark and maintained complete silence. Despite the colossal volume of fire, he was there steadfast with Charlie Company. From then on, Kalu enjoyed the preferential treatment reserved for achievers!

In a way, the capture of Point 13620 and Black Rocks proved to be a morale booster for the beleaguered Indian Army reeling under the recent humiliation in the Kutch area. SN Prasad and UP Thapliyal write in their book: 'The Kargil operation was in the nature of a counter-offensive, undertaken by Indian troops in many years. Its success gave a fillip to the troops in Jammu and Kashmir and the Army as a whole. Politically, it bolstered the image of the country.'

However, the tactical gain was surrendered by India on 30 June that year after it returned the two posts to Pakistan following an appeal by the UN Secretary General, who assured India about the safety of the Srinagar–Kargil–Leh highway. Why and how it was done is another story, and that Pakistan meant to continue with its bad ways was proven in less than three months when it launched Operation Gibraltar.

A Devious Campaign to Capture Kashmir

Thwarting Pakistan's Design

Although India's 121 Brigade had captured Point 13620 with meticulous planning and daring assault, India had to return the post to Pakistan on 30 June 1965 following an appeal by the United Nations Secretary General. In those years the UN still wielded some authority – unlike in the current scenario where many nations blatantly flout UN conventions and ignore appeals. It is also instructive to note that the UN Secretary General branded India as the aggressor in the Kargil operation.

A report of the UN Secretary General made public post the 1965 war said: 'Among the most serious of violations was one that occurred in May of this year when Indian troops in battalion strength attacked and captured Pakistani positions in the Kargil area of Kashmir and remained in occupation of them. In the interest of preserving the CFL (ceasefire line), I appealed to the Government of India to withdraw its troops from the Pakistan side of the line. On assurance from me that UN Observers would henceforth be stationed on both sides of the line in that area, which India considered strategically vital to the security of the Srinagar–Leh Road, the Government of India agreed to do so and in due course the Indian troops were withdrawn, thus closing the matter and making unnecessary any further consideration of a report on it to the Security Council. Subsequently, there were some military attacks on the road by armed elements from the Pakistan side.'

What this report did not say was how Indian troops had to once again capture Point 13620 in September to prevent the Pakistanis from targeting the vital highway. Also, one may note the use of terms in the UN Secretary General's report. For India he said 'Indian troops in battalion strength', while for Pakistan it was 'armed elements'.

The UN's apparent intervention notwithstanding, Pakistan's decision makers were already in the midst of planning a major armed raid into the Kashmir Valley in June–July of 1965. Their confidence stemmed from the 'successful' taming of Indian forces in Kutch and the fact that India as a country was in a state of great flux in that period.

Lieutenant General Harbakhsh Singh, general officer commanding-in-chief (GoC-in-C) of the Western Command—which was in charge of India's defences from Kashmir to Rajasthan—had been alive to Pakistani designs. His staff had assessed threats to India's defences all across the CFL, as the LoC was then called. In his book *War Despatches: Indo-Pak Conflict 1965*, General Harbakhsh writes: 'I had appreciated that Pak would mount her main offensive across the ceasefire line. This would be a logical course of action for realisation of her political aim of ab-

sorbing J&K.’

General Harbakhsh had received intelligence that Pakistan was raising a ‘substantial irregular’ force trained in guerrilla and clandestine operations. ‘There had also been emphasis on paratrooper training at Peshawar for Special Services Group (SSG) personnel, whose strength was estimated at up to eight companies,’ he writes. ‘It was my view that Pak would initiate aggression into J&K by launching a large-scale infiltration campaign using irregular forces. This infiltration would be on a wide front with a view to forcing dispersion of our forces and to undermine the morale of local population.’

His assessment was spot on. Bajwa notes: ‘Having viewed with satisfaction the Pakistani Army outgunning India, especially in the use of armour and artillery in the sand dunes of Kutch, Ayub was now a receptive listener to those who had been urging for some time that 1965 was an ideal time for a military solution to Kashmir.’ It was, however, soon apparent that the Commander-in-Chief of the Pakistani Army General Muhammad Musa was opposed to the idea. According to Bajwa, General Musa felt inadequate preparation was being made inside the Valley to organise support.

Many factors, not the least being the belief among some of Ayub’s hawkish advisers that the general population in Kashmir Valley was ready to rise in revolt against India, led Ayub to go along with, what later turned out to be, a militarily unsound operational plan. Pakistan’s military intelligence and foreign ministry (headed by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto) were of the view that from late 1964 onward there was a surge in anti-India feelings in Kashmir Valley and the people would be more than willing to support Pakistani intervention.

In fact, as Bajwa says, ‘Planning ways to reactivate the Kashmir issue and to consider a military solution went back as far as 1964. Ayub asked the (Pakistan) Intelligence Bureau to consider ways of keeping the Kashmir issue alive and in early 1964 Aziz Ahmed was made chairman of the newly formed Kashmir Publicity Committee with the rather vague instruction of “keeping the Kashmir issue alive”.’

As 1965 began, the issue was indeed kept alive. The ‘softening up’, as General Harbakhsh describes it, had started in January that year itself and became progressively virulent as the year progressed. As Indian and Pakistani forces battled it out in Kutch, a mix of aggressive firing along the CFL and a series of subversive activities kept Kashmir on the edge. ‘A flood of malicious propaganda was let loose to condition the minds of the locals for the momentous events that were to follow soon,’ writes General Harbakhsh.

Newspaper reports of the time suggest that the shelling and firing across the CFL, intrusions and other provocative activities increased manifold between January and July 1965. The army recorded some 1,800 such activities in that period, as

compared to just about 522 in the same period in 1964. In June and July 1965, there were at least half a dozen firing incidents daily across the CFL. Remember, unlike now, there were only two divisions in J&K 50 years ago. Both 19 Division (at Baramulla) and 25 Division (at Rajouri) were stretched across the CFL, north and south of the Pir Panjal. General Harbakhsh notes in some detail: 'Acts of sabotage and subversion, a familiar feature of Pak intrigues in the Valley, touched a new high during July and reached their peak in the first week of August. Specially trained agents and saboteurs were projected into J&K for mass-scale subversive activities, in order to generate amongst the populace an atmosphere of despair and despondency with a view to eroding the authority of the civil administration. The resulting situation of lawlessness and disorder, it was hoped, would push the government to the brink of an abyss, ready to topple over with the next stage of large-scale infiltration.

'There were acts of arson in the towns of Punch (as Poonch was spelt at that time) and Srinagar on 30 June and 8 July, respectively, and a large number of houses and shops were razed to the ground. Time bombs were detected in public buses. A few were found planted with the obvious intent of assassinating political leaders. An opportunist dissident section of the local population, sensing the way wind would soon blow, contributed their mite (*sic*) in the service of Pak by freely tossing about the word "jihad" from public platforms. The ground was being prepared with elaborate care for the first phase of Pak aggression.'

There is consensus among various personal accounts of the 1965 war as well as newspaper reports of that period that the scheme of infiltration was planned in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) under the overall command of Major General Akhtar Hussain Malik, then the GoC of Pakistan's 12 Division. All the four sector commanders under Major General Akhtar Malik were made responsible for organising, training and launching infiltrators' groups from their assigned areas. These groups, numbering some 30,000 men, were named Gibraltar Force. The aim of Operation Gibraltar was clearly laid down. It was to 'create large-scale disturbances in Jammu and Kashmir which would force India to take major political and military steps to meet the situation and which, in turn, would nullify her pretentious stand before the world that no political problem exists in Kashmir.'



Flushing out infiltrators in the J&K Valley

There is an interesting aside here on how this force came to be christened as Gibraltar Force. Russell Brines in his book *The Indo- Pakistani Conflict* cites a paper in *The Muslim* which claims the name was taken from an ancient episode: ‘Most Muslims know about the famed Arab General Abdur Rahman Tariq whose forces landed on the Jablul Tariq (Gibraltar) and Tariq asked his men to burn the boats. When his men asked how they would return to Arabia, their homeland, after the boats were burnt, he said that now Spain and Gibraltar were their homeland and there was no question of their returning to former homeland.’

Brines writes: ‘In effect, the men of Gibraltar Force were to take over Indian-held Kashmir after crushing the local population—just as General Tariq’s men had done centuries ago. Clearly, General Malik was not General Tariq, and neither were the men in the Gibraltar Force as good as Tariq’s soldiers!’

Before exploring the role of the Gibraltar Force, it is important to comprehend its structural organisation. It was divided into task forces, commanded and populated by officers and men from the Pakistan-occupied Kashmir battalions. According to Thapliyal and Prasad, ‘the Razakars, who formed about 70 per cent of the force, were raised in PoK in August 1962 at the government’s behest and included all able-bodied civilians living near the border. The Mujahids were recruited in PoK and primarily used as porters.’

The task forces were to operate in specified areas of Jammu and Kashmir (see [map 4](#)) (or Indian-controlled Kashmir—ICK, as Pakistan described it). This is how they were organised:

Tariq Force	:	Sonamarg, Kargil and Dras
Qasim Force	:	Kupwara, Gurez and Bandipur
Khalid Force	:	Trehgaon, Chowkibal, Nangaon and Tithwal
Salauddin Force	:	Uri Sector and Srinagar Valley
Ghaznavi Force	:	Mendhar, Rajouri and Naushera
Babar Force	:	Kalidhar Range and Chhamb
Murtaza Force	:	Kel
Jacob Force	:	Minimarg
Nusrat Force	:	Tithwal

In addition to these groupings, the Sikander Force and some unidentified groups were organised to conduct subversive activities across Jammu and Kashmir.

The Razakars were given elementary training in PoK at Nikial, Khuiratta, Darman, Kalargala, Kotli and Bher, to name a few places, by the PoK battalions. Later, intensive training sessions were organised with regular troops. They were trained in: laying ambush; destruction of bridges; disruption of lines of communication; organising raids on supply dumps and formation HQ; and unarmed combat. They were equipped like a proper army (with a wireless set, an 83 mm rocket, plastic explosives, Verey lights, etc.). The Pakistanis were also generous in supplying ammunition. While each member carried a weapon, some ammunition and four grenades, the whole bunch was lavished with huge amounts of ammunition including 200 rounds per rifle, 200–500 rounds per Sten gun, and 750 rounds per light machine gun. Interestingly, each of the infiltrators—Razakars as well as PoK troops—were issued with green Mazari shirts and salwars along with jungle boots to give them the appearance of civilians. They were plied with seven days of cooked and uncooked rations. More importantly, they were issued fake identity cards and adequate Indian currency to meet contingency purchases. One account of that time mentioned how each company commander was given Rs 10,000 (a lot of money at that time) to enable the infiltrators to subsist on local purchases.

The command and control of the operation was exercised by HQ Gibraltar Force in PoK. Each force was given the powerful ANGRC-9 wireless set for long-range communication. Each platoon was issued a transistor set so that instructions for the infiltrators could be transmitted through Azad Kashmir Radio in specified codes at prearranged times.

As the planning gathered pace, sector commanders and force commanders were summoned to Murree during the second week of July 1965 and were addressed by

President Ayub and GoC of 12 Division Major General Akhtar Hussain Malik on 1 August. Both apparently emphasised that this was their last chance to liberate Kashmir.

According to the infiltration plan, the raiders were to enter ICK in small groups between 1 and 5 August, assemble at predetermined points, and then mingle with the crowds celebrating the festival of Pir Dastagir Sahib on 8 August. On the following day, the armed raiders were to mix with the crowds of protestors organised by the Action Committee, who had planned a big demonstration to mark the day on which Sheikh Abdullah was dismissed in 1953. The armed raiders were to mingle with the crowds, engineer an armed uprising, and in the process capture the radio station and other vital installations.

With all possible contingencies covered, all angles looked at, and all necessary preparation done, Pakistan was set to roll out Operation Gibraltar. Yet, as they say in the military, what is a plan if it all goes according to plan! Pakistani infiltrators had obviously overestimated the support they would receive from the local population in J&K.



Clearing infiltrators in the Tithwal and Uri sectors

General Harbakhsh Singh writes in *War Despatches*: ‘A young Bakarwal (shepherd) named Mohammad Din, who was tending to his cattle at Dara Kassi in the vicinity of Gulmarg, was approached by two armed strangers wearing green salwar-kameez uniform. They solicited his assistance for obtaining certain information in exchange of a bribe of Rs 400. The lad grew suspicious and under the ostensible excuse of complying with their request rushed off to the nearest police station at Tanmarg. Within a short space of time the army was alerted and a strong pa-

trol was on its way. In the ensuing action, the group of infiltrators disintegrated.’ As the infiltrators fled into the jungles south of Buna Danwas, ‘the army patrols recovered four rifles, three Sten guns, 9 LMG barrels and 26 grenades,’ according to the 19 Division’s Digest of Operations of that period.

More dramatic developments were to follow far away from Gulmarg – in fact, many miles away, south of the Pir Panjal Range. One Wazir Mohammad of village Dhabrot in Mendhar Sector ran into a group of well-armed, suspicious-looking men at Galuthi. Writes General Harbakhsh: ‘After profuse conciliatory gestures to win his cooperation, (they) offered him a cash prize for a similar purpose. He, too, promising the required help, promptly made his way instead to HQ 120 Infantry Brigade. An ad hoc patrol of platoon strength from among the personnel of brigade HQ was immediately despatched to confirm the report.’

The patrol was being led by Captain Chander Narain Singh. As they neared the area of Galuthi, Captain Singh’s platoon encountered a strong attack. It was dark and the enemy was well entrenched. As Captain Singh led the patrol towards the enemy position, an LMG burst killed him and three soldiers. The remaining platoon counter-attacked and killed six infiltrators. The rest of the infiltrators were forced to flee back into PoK, leaving behind large quantities of arms, ammunition and equipment. Captain Singh was awarded the Mahavir Chakra (posthumous) for his daring feat of taking on a well-entrenched enemy.

In retrospect, these two incidents were to prove crucial in thwarting the Pakistani designs. As General Harbakhsh observes, ‘the importance of the above incidents lay not so much in the patriotic instincts of Mohammad Din and Wazir Mohammad, or the gallantry displayed by our troops by their prompt reaction, but in the early discovery of the raiders on our soil. There is no doubt that the unexpected detection of the “coup” on 5 August 1965 put out of gear the carefully calculated designs of Pak.’

The body blow to the Pakistani plan was to come three days later. On 8 August, two Pakistani army officers, Captain Ghulam Hussain and Mohammad Sajjad of 8 and 18 Azad Kashmir battalions respectively, were captured near Narian. The documents in their possession and their interrogation unravelled the complete Pakistani plan. The Indian Army was able to gear itself up to face their strategic infiltration. The two officers disclosed that they were the leading elements of an ambitious Pakistani plan to seize J&K by force. The documents were invaluable. They shed light on the fact that the plan was hatched as early as January 1965 and that the Mujahid Force was formally embodied through a presidential ordinance. General Harbakhsh acknowledges that the plan was ‘brilliant’ in conception, and also that it came as a surprise. He recollects: ‘Our intelligence set-up had given only vague inklings of what was happening on the “other side of the hill”; of the actual scale and scope of the massive campaign that was to follow, we had no informa-

tion.'

But if the Indian Army was caught unaware, the Pakistani planners were taken aback too. Bajwa writes: 'Things were to go from bad to worse for the Pakistani planners when, on the evening of 8 August, All India Radio broadcast interviews with prisoners captured from the Gibraltar Force. They provided a detailed account of the planning and execution of the Gibraltar Force. (Brigadier) Irshad (director of intelligence of the Pakistani Army), on hearing a summary of the interview, was reported to have said, "Oh my God, the bastards have spilled the beans," demonstrating the panic that must have set in among the people directing the operation.'

Although the planners in Pakistan would have despaired at the capture of the raiders, the remaining infiltrators were going about their jobs quite methodically. On 8 August, for instance, about 19 infiltrators raided Jaurian Camp a few kilometres away from Dewa Batala, near Chhamb, where 3 Jammu & Kashmir (JAK) Militia was deployed. The infiltrators killed three Army Service Corps (ASC) drivers and damaged a few engineer company vehicles. For 3 JAK Militia, it was a challenge to capture and destroy these infiltrators.

Two platoons of the battalion were ordered to move to Kalit area under the command of the young Lieutenant TD Thakar. The platoons were commanded by Jemadar GK Wafa and Jemadar Janak Singh. This ad hoc company, less a platoon, followed the trail of the raiders and was soon on their heels. Assessing the strength of the enemy, Lieutenant Thakar overtook them and laid an ambush that resulted in the capture of ten intruders along with two LMGs, a number of .303 rifles, seven Sten machine carbines, a rocket launcher, and several high-explosive hand grenades.

The captured infiltrators were handed over to the 191 Brigade HQ. His platoon's operation earned Jemadar GK Wafa a Sena medal, while Lieutenant Thakar and Company Havildar Major (CHM) Gaffar Lone received mentioned-in-dispatches.

Such encounters were happening all over Jammu and Kashmir. General Harbakhsh has best described it: 'The period of the infiltration campaign was characterised by intense, hectic activity throughout the J&K theatre, with special emphasis on the Valley. The raiders and own forces marched and counter-marched all over the inhospitable terrain in a vast grim game of hide-and-seek. Several times during the day the opponents met, clashed and reeled apart in a series of bloody actions, weaving a confused pattern hard to unravel.'

Fifty years ago or thereabouts, unlike today, the presence of the security forces in J&K was thin. In the Kashmir Valley, for instance, apart from the rudimentary strength of the police, there were only four battalions of the Jammu & Kashmir Militia available for any counter-offensive. Aware of the situation, General Harbakhsh decided to send reinforcements on 6 August. The 4 Sikh Light Infantry (LI)

stationed at Kasauli, near Shimla, was ordered to be airlifted to Srinagar. Another unit, the 2/9 Gorkha battalion, was asked to move by road from Jammu to Srinagar.

On 8 August, Army Chief General JN Chaudhuri was in Jalandhar visiting 16 Cavalry as he was the colonel of the regiment. General Harbakhsh travelled to Jalandhar from Shimla, which in those days served as the HQ of Western Command, to confer with the army chief. After getting a general briefing from General Harbakhsh on the overall situation in Kashmir and the likely breakout of hostilities on the international border, the army chief left for 16 Cavalry, where he was to address the men. As General Harbakhsh was discussing the situation with the XI Corps commander, a phone call from Delhi interrupted their conversation. It was the defence secretary on the line. He wished to speak with the army chief. On being informed that the chief was not available to speak, the defence secretary told General Harbakhsh that the cabinet was meeting at that very moment and wanted the army's opinion on the J&K government's request that the army take over the state and martial law be declared given the steadily deteriorating situation. General Harbakhsh writes: 'I pleaded against the proposal of the J&K government. I argued that by doing so we would be playing into the hands of the enemy. I further assured the defence secretary that the situation was not as bad as depicted by the J&K government.'

After assuring the defence secretary and thereby the cabinet, General Harbakhsh promptly rang up Lieutenant General KS Katoch, GOC 15 Corps, for a realistic assessment of the situation. General Katoch told his army commander that although the infiltrators had managed to enter one of the suburbs of Srinagar, their number was not so large and that he was waiting for the first company of 2/9 Gorkhas to arrive from Jammu as ordered by General Harbakhsh the previous evening.



Captured infiltrators being frisked



Infiltrators captured in Kashmir

Later, the chief of army staff returned to the inspection bungalow and was briefed about the latest developments by General Harbakhsh. The chief then rang

up Defence Minister YB Chavan and told him that he agreed with General Harbakhsh's assessment that the army should not take control of J&K.

The next day, the Western Command chief flew into Srinagar. There was palpable tension in the air. 'The streets were deserted and there were visible signs of anxiety and tension on the faces of the residents peering through the windows. By the time I reached Srinagar, however, the entire 2/9 Gorkha battalion had arrived from Jammu and was suitably deployed in the city... the corps commander felt confident enough to handle the situation with the help of the Gorkhas... I took the opportunity to call on the chief minister and reassured him of our ability to deal with the situation,' General Harbakhsh recounts.

Even as the forces were being reorganised, a number of infiltrators had managed to cross over into the state—both north and south of Pir Panjal—and several skirmishes were reported from all across J&K. On 6 August, the 68 Infantry Brigade, which was to win a major battle later that month, was brought in all the way from Leh to Tanmarg along with the 6 Dogra battalion. The next day, 6 Dogra intercepted a group of 200 infiltrators near Magam on their way to Srinagar. About half a dozen intruders were caught and a couple of them were killed. Later that night, 4 Kumaon, the battalion that would be tasked to capture the heights of Siachen in April 1984, lost 10 men while defending two vital bridges at Kralapur and Sonarwain.

In the 25 Division Sector (Poonch–Rajouri, south of Pir Panjal), about 500 infiltrators had crossed over through the Kopra forest short of the Haji Pir bulge and were heading towards Nawan and Jamainwali Gali, en route to Srinagar via Badgam. The 7 Sikh battalion deployed at Gali picket repeatedly withstood all assaults launched by the infiltrators. The 7 Sikh was, in fact, a battalion that was raised just about two years before the 1965 war. A detailed account of their exploits in the Poonch–Mendhar Sector during the 1965 war is available in the book *An Infantry Battalion in Combat: A Critical Appraisal of Battle Situations*, authored by Lieutenant Colonel (retired) Sube Singh Ahlawat.

Mandi town, 20 km inside what was then the CFL (now the LoC), was occupied by the infiltrators on 9 August, when they attacked the police post, killed the station house officer, and established their control after looting the weapons. The 7 Sikh battalion immediately formed a task force comprising its A and B companies under the leadership of its 2IC (second in command), Major KG Belliappa. The A and B companies were led by 2/Lt (second lieutenant) SS Sandhu and 2/Lt SS Ahlawat. Mandi town was wrested back on 12 August.

Skirmishes continued all across J&K. On 12 August, for instance, the 3 JAK Militia laid an ambush in which two Pakistani soldiers were killed. Having suffered repeated reverses in this sector, the infiltrators and their controllers changed their tactics soon enough.

Pakistan now brought down effective artillery fire all along the sector under 191 Infantry Brigade. India's Independence Day, 15 August, turned out to be a 'black day' for the brigade headquarters. Tragedy struck the brigade as an enemy artillery shell landed on an artillery ammunition dump setting off a huge explosion, killing the commander of 191 Infantry Brigade, Brigadier BF Master, along with his staff officer, the signal officer, and an artillery officer.

An entry in the 3 JAK Militia War Diary notes: 'With the brigade headquarters almost on the verge of collapse, there was some disorder in the formation. The enemy, on the other hand, was closing in with more strength and most of the forward posts were surrounded. Our line of communication was cut off, and even the radio messages were not received clearly due to frequent jamming and interception by the enemy. Unfortunately, B and D companies became victims of this communication failure and were surrounded by the enemy. The company commanders realised that it would be futile to give a fight from their localities and decided to fall back at Mandiala, where the battalion headquarters was located. The two companies followed different routes of withdrawal, but unfortunately B Company column was intercepted by the enemy and Sub. Honorary Captain (retd) Kirtan Singh was wounded and Sepoy Latif was taken prisoner, while Sepoy Dena Ram died fighting the enemy. The rest of the company managed to reach Mandiala intact.'

General Harbakhsh had to take the immediate decision to post a new brigade commander. 'After discussing the situation with GOC, XV Corps, on telephone, I directed him to:

- (a) move Brigadier Manmohan Singh, commander of 162 Brigade under 26 Division, to Jaurian to take over 191 Infantry Brigade;
- (b) reinforce 191 Brigade with 2 Sikh from 26 Infantry Division;
- (c) reinforce 191 Infantry Brigade artillery effort with a battery of medium guns from 26 Infantry Division, from a position East of the Dagger; and
- (d) order the commander 191 Infantry Brigade to recapture lost ground in Chhamb area.'

Several such readjustments and reinforcements had to be made with regard to the Indian forces between 9 and 20 August, as the Indian Army chased, killed and drove out a large number of infiltrators across J&K. Although the number of Pakistani infiltrators who managed to cross the CFL was hard to estimate, a conservative guess was that nearly 5,000 well-armed men of the Gibraltar Force had infiltrated into J&K.

This was an unprecedented situation and had attracted international attention, especially from the United States and the United Kingdom, who were concerned about the deteriorating situation. On 14 August, Chester Bowles, the US Ambassador to India, reported the matter to Washington. Bajwa notes: 'Bowles also said

that if Pakistan had hoped that its infiltration and propaganda would lead to an uprising, then its intelligence was “woefully inept and planning and operation of this gambit equally so”. The US defence attaché based in Delhi, who had recently returned from Kashmir, was reported to have said that the Kashmiris were in no mood to welcome the Pakistanis as they “never had an appetite for violence and have traditionally feared the Indians”.’

Clearly, the planners of Operation Gibraltar had overestimated the ability of the Kashmiris to rise up in rebellion. As this British review of the war simply noted, ‘the inhabitants of the Valley, noted more for the beauty of their women than the martial valour of their men, did not revolt.’ (Bajwa)

On 14 August, HQ SRI was formed with Major General Umrao Singh in command to deal with the Pakistani infiltrators in the Valley. This enabled HQ 19 Infantry Division to concentrate on the counter-offensives to stem the tide of infiltrators.

The Counter-Offensive

The month of August was to prove very tough for the Indian Army. Even if the Kashmiri population was unwilling to cooperate with the infiltrators, the task of recovering lost ground and throwing out the intruders was going to be a big challenge. As the days passed though, India gained gradual control by waging some spectacular battles and registering some fantastic victories that turned the tide.

By 14 August, the Indian planners had a fair idea of the extent of the threat posed by the infiltrators. General Harbakhsh, aided by his bold commanders and backed by clear political directive from Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri and Defence Minister YB Chavan, had come to the conclusion that the only way to eliminate the menace was to go on the offensive and destroy the sanctuaries that the infiltrators had inside PoK. Once the decision was taken, the action was swift.

As a first step, India decided to recapture the three Pakistani posts on the Kargil heights, which had once again begun to pose a constant danger to the Srinagar–Leh Road. In retrospect, the Indian decision to hand back Post 13620 and Black Rock to Pakistan, overlooking Kargil town and the strategic highway, at the urging of the UN Secretary General in May was a wrong one. In August, 17 Punjab was defending the heights, having replaced 4 Rajput, who had captured the posts in May. On 14 August, the commanding officer of 17 Punjab was ordered to recapture Point 13620 at the earliest.

Prasad and Thapliyal describe the operation in some detail: ‘The battalion immediately carried out some regrouping to ensure that the defences remained intact, while a balanced striking force with adequate reserves was created... Major Balwant Singh, CO of D Company, was appointed commander of the task force, including two platoons from D Company, one platoon from A Company and supporting elements. The objectives, viz., Point 13620, Saddle and Black Rock, were

to be captured by 0500 hours on 15 August. Three platoons were to attack these objectives from three different directions. The troops were to climb up the slopes through the gaps in the minefield created by the engineers at night. Each assaulting platoon was accompanied by a forward observation officer, a mobile fire controller, one section of MMG, and a detachment of engineers for breaching and laying of mines. The operation commenced at 0100 hours as planned. Radio silence was maintained. Complete surprise was achieved and all three objectives were captured by the morning of 15 August, without suffering any casualty.'

Incredibly, the Pakistanis once again lost the dominant feature to the assaulting Indian troops. More incredibly though, India returned the three posts to the Pakistanis at the end of the war in September 1965, only to win it back in 1971 and hold on to them ever since!

During the counter-offensive in 1965, the army realised that not only did it need to neutralise the Pakistani presence in the Haji Pir Sector and wrest the feature to establish dominance in the area, but it also needed to secure the Tithwal Sector. So, a limited offensive to secure a series of tactical features was launched on 23 August.

At 2345 hours that night, a combined patrol composed of 2 Rajput and 3/8 Gorkha Rifles secured the Ring Contour area across the CFL. This was the first Indian foray into enemy territory. Although no opposition was encountered on the objective, the Pakistanis shelled the position throughout the night, against which the Rajputs and the Gorkhas held their ground.

Similarly, on Richmar Ridge, on the intervening night of 24 and 25 August, an under-strength 1 Sikh company supported by 138 Mountain Battery and 17 Field Battery attacked the Pakistani post held by a platoon. The attack was ably led by Major S Kapur, who was subsequently awarded Vir Chakra for his action and leadership. Taken completely by surprise, the Pakistani platoon fled in confusion. The assaulting force pressed on to a location that was occupied by a company of Pakistan's 15 AK battalion and 5 Punjab (Pakistan). Richmar Ridge was thus captured at 2250 hours. Eight Pakistani soldiers were killed, while five others were captured. India lost one soldier and seven others were wounded.

There were a series of tactical battles that allowed India to regain the initiative. However, the biggest battle was yet to unfold at Haji Pir, as we will see in the following chapter.

Haji Pir: Taking the Battle to the Enemy

Capturing a Vital Height

In April 2013, military aficionados gathered at London's National Army Museum voted the twin battles of Kohima and Imphal, between the British Indian Army and the Japanese Imperial Army during April–July 1944, as Great Britain's 'greatest battle' ever fought, beating Waterloo and Normandy—two other decisive victories in war for Britain—to second and third place respectively. The voting was done by a select audience of military enthusiasts, not ordinary citizens. To that extent, it was subjective. Yet, if the greatness of a battle is judged by its political, cultural and social impact, as much as its military impact, then Imphal and Kohima were really significant for a number of reasons, not least because they showed that the Japanese were not invincible and that they could be beaten, and beaten well. The battles of Imphal and Kohima saw the British and Indian forces, under the overall command of Lieutenant-General William Slim, repel the Japanese invasion of India and helped turn the tide of the war in the Far East.

India has fought four major wars (1947–48, 1962, 1965 and 1971) and a local conflict in Kargil (1999) since its independence. Many heroic acts and decisive moments in the glorious history of valour, sacrifice and team spirit displayed by Indian soldiers come to mind, but if there is one battle that can truly be called a turning point in the overall context of a war, the vote should go to the conquest of the Haji Pir bulge under Operation Bakshi in August 1965. An important area for infiltration into Kashmir Valley and Rajouri/Poonch areas, Haji Pir Pass is located on the Pir Panjal Range at 2,637 on the road between Uri and Poonch.

After the army took a decision in the middle of August 1965 to go on the offensive and cross the CFL if needed, following the large-scale infiltration into J&K, one juicy target beckoned: the Haji Pir Pass.

General Harbakhsh explains: 'Pakistan did exploit the peculiar configuration of the ceasefire line in the Haji Pir bulge, for launching the main influx of her infiltration campaign into the Valley. In addition to using this area for entry routes, huge stocks of arms equipment and supplies had been built up at several places in the bulge for speedy administrative support of the various raider groups. The Haji Pir Operation was intended to knock the logistic bottom out of the infiltration campaign, as also to plug the entry routes of the raiders...'



The Haji Pir Pass

The pass had to be captured since it worked as a lifeline for the saboteurs operating in the Poonch area. It was dominated by three adjoining hill features – Bedori (3,760 metres high) in the north-east, Ledwali Gali (3,140 metres) in the north-west, and Sank (2,895 metres) in the north. The capture of these features was considered necessary for advancing on to Haji Pir Pass. Bedori was about 4 km to the south of the CFL, and Haji Pir Pass was about 10 km to the south-west of Bedori.

Capturing the pass was not going to be easy. Brigadier ZC ‘Zoru’ Bakshi, a veteran of the Burma campaign in World War II, was commander of 68 Brigade, which was drafted in from Srinagar and placed under the command of 19 Division headquartered at Baramulla. As the infiltrators started pouring into the Valley, the brigade was pulled into the conflict. Retired Brigadier Shamsher Singh, who was then a young signals captain with barely two-and-a-half years of service in 1965, remembers: ‘On 4 August 1965, 68 Brigade was asked to take part in the investiture parade planned in Srinagar for 15 August. Even as we were practising for the event, we came to know on 7 August that infiltration had taken place across Pir Panjal. And sure enough, we were put into action in Gulmarg two days later. Though the infiltrators had a tough time—with no local support, no food, we were chasing them all over the place.’

As the anti-infiltration campaign picked up speed, there were fresh orders for the brigade. Recalls Brigadier Shamsher: ‘Somewhere around 14–15 August—I was just a company commander, an OC of the signal company of the 68 Mountain Brigade with less than three years of service—I felt some lull in the operation. We

were pulled back from Gulmarg to a place called Pattan. Around 18–19 August my brigade major (BM)—the lynchpin of a brigade who coordinates between the commander and the battalions under the brigade—told me: “get ready for something bigger.” The briefing (orders) took place at Rampur, the 161 Brigade HQ. We had nothing of our own paraphernalia. The original battalions under 68 Brigade were left behind where they were, and we were given three brand new battalions: 1 Para, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Prabhjinder; 4 Rajput, headed by Lieutenant Colonel Sudarshan Singh (the same battalion that had captured Point 13620 and Black Rocks in Kargil in May that year); and 19 Punjab, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Sampooran Singh. Coincidentally, all three infantry battalion commanding officers (COs) were Khalsas. Even field regiment CO, Lieutenant Colonel Shivdev Singh, was a Khalsa, and so was I.’

The COs met the brigade commander – Brigadier ZC Bakshi, PVSM, MVC, VrC, VSM, MacGregor medal – for the first time in the operations room at Rampur. Brigadier Bakshi was the most highly decorated officer in the Indian Army at that time.

On 21 August, Brigadier Bakshi’s opening lines in the briefing for the operation were: ‘Gentleman, since 1947 we have been cribbing that the government does not allow us to attack, go into offensive, but this time we have been given a clear mandate to capture Haji Pir at any cost. Where I say at any cost, to a civilian it may mean 100 per cent casualties, but I as an infantryman say that only when you have had 40 per cent casualties, come back to me – otherwise press home. In World War II, after my company lost 40 per cent strength we were prevented from pressing further.’

Brigadier Shamsheer recalls: ‘Ironically, our own battalion, 6 Dogras, was left behind in Gulmarg to mop up the infiltrators. So the plan was that D-day would be 24 August. The attack was to be two-pronged: on the right, the capture of Sank-Sar-Ledwali Gali was to be initiated on the night of 24th and completed by the following morning. On left, 19 Punjab was to capture Bedori by 0900 hours and the Rajputs were to push through to capture Haji Pir by that evening. That was the plan (see [map 5](#)). And as they say in the Staff College, ‘Gentleman, this is my plan, but if everything goes according to plan, there is something wrong with this plan.’ Sure enough, on the evening of 24th it rained so heavily that it was going to be impossible to launch the attack. I remember, I was wearing a blue turban. Its colour drained on to my face, so much so that Brigadier Bakshi jokingly asked, ‘Have you camouflaged yourself with the blue colour?’ Anyway, the attack was postponed by 24 hours.

‘We went in on the night of 25 August. 1 Para was to attack Sank-Sar, and 19 Punjab was to launch an attack on Bedori. However, that night, 1 Para could not contact the objective as they were “daylighted”, meaning they were exposed in the

open. In the mountains you could not launch a daylight attack, so they were pulled back. On the other side, 19 Punjab attacked Bedori but they could not go beyond Pathri. The conditions were bad because of the previous day's rain – the slopes were slippery. So, the position on the morning of 26th, both 1 Para and 19 Punjab were stalled. Zoru (Brigadier Bakshi) was sitting on Rustom picket, contemplating his next move, when he got a call from his coursemate Hardev Kler, then a G-1 from 19 Division, who told him that Bedori had already been captured. Zoru was surprised. I was sitting with him. He said to Hardev Kler, "It can't be." Kler offered to put him through to the 161 Brigade commander. The 161 Brigade commander was patched through and he also told Zoru, "I have captured Bedori. What's the problem?" Zoru was still not convinced. However, he took the 161 Brigade commander's word for it and told 4 Rajput to go and occupy Bedori to consolidate and let 19 Punjab press ahead since the ultimate objective was Haji Pir.'

Brigadier Shamsheer, now in his mid-seventies but still in possession of a sharp memory that recounts every moment of that historic period, continues: 'On the evening of 26th August, that is, the night of 26th–27th, as 4 Rajput advanced towards Bedori, they came under attack. Surprised at the Pakistanis still being there, the Rajputs asked for artillery fire on Bedori. Zoru did not allow that since he was told it was already captured. In the bargain, the Rajputs took casualties and were stalled at the base of Bedori. When Zoru informed GOC 19 Division, Major General SS Kalaan, about the situation on ground, General Kalaan lost his cool. The GOC told Zoru that the Rajputs must be asked to press on and capture Bedori at any cost since it had already been announced on radio that India had captured the peak. Zoru refused. He told the GOC, "Sir, if I tell CO 4 Rajput now to capture Bedori, he will mutiny. One moment we tell them it is in our control, the next we tell them to go and capture it! This is not on." So, the situation on the morning of 27th was: the Rajputs were stalled, 19 Punjab was sitting around doing nothing. Meanwhile, 1 Para had done alright. They were in Ledwali Gali by the morning of 27th.'

For 1 Para, getting to Ledwali Gali was not easy. The attack was launched at 2230 hours on the night of 27th by B Company, followed by D Company, which moved forward towards Point 9591, also known as Sank. The Pakistani troops rushed from their trenches and opened fire with MMGs, LMGs and other small arms. The Indians also opened up, forcing the enemy back into the trenches. By 0430 hrs on 27 August, B Company was within 450 metres of the Pakistani positions and formed up to charge frontally. In the daring platoon attack that followed, the Pakistani MMGs and LMGs were silenced. The Pakistanis were forced to retreat to Sar, leaving 16 dead; they managed to evacuate 100-odd wounded soldiers. Despite the small tactical victory, the position was still not secure since a menacing

fire from Sar continued to pin them down. D Company was tasked to clear the feature. It soon captured Sar and advanced to Ledwali Gali, where the Pakistanis made their last stand to allow safe withdrawal of their remaining troops. B Company had meanwhile secured the surrounding areas.

Despite these victories against heavy odds, Haji Pir was still in Pakistani control. That's when Brigadier Bakshi took what Brigadier Shamsheer thinks was the momentous decision of the 1965 war—and he took it unilaterally! As he narrates what Zorua Bakshi did on the morning of 27 August 1965, Brigadier Shamsheer's eyes are looking far back into the past, his face glowing with pride at having been one of the prime witnesses to that historic decision.

Brigadier Shamsheer recounts: 'A most historic and momentous decision was taken by Zorua in my presence. Very few can do that in any army, in any era. After General Kalaan told him to take Bedori, and after 1 Para had reached Ledwali Gali, Zorua knew that the Pakis would have guessed by then that all the thrust by the Indians was towards capturing Haji Pir Pass. Zorua knew the Pakis would have reinforced Haji Pir and, sure enough, they had. The 18 Punjab (Pakistan) was rushed in to defend Haji Pir on the night of 27–28 August. Yet, as the man tasked to capture the vital pass, Zorua knew he had to press on with the plan despite mounting odds and in spite of the express orders of the GOC to first capture Bedori.

'So Zorua asked CO, 1 Para, Lieutenant Colonel Prabhjinder, as to who could lead a commando-style operation on Haji Pir. Prabhjinder nominated Major Ranjit Singh Dyal. Before Dyal started his operation, Zorua told him in typical Punjabi: *Agar te jit liya Haji Pir to tu hero ban jayega, ne to meenu wah kaid kar lenge* (If you win Haji Pir you will be a hero, but if you can't I will be arrested for taking a unilateral decision).'



Major RS Dyal

Major Dyal was given a mixed column of A and D companies. It started the march to Haji Pir from Ledwali Gali around 1530 hours on the afternoon of 27 August, descending to the Hyderabad Nallah along the spur. It encountered MMG firing from the western shoulder of Haji Pir. Small-arms fire also rained down on the

column from the east of the pass. The forward observation officer (FOO) registered the two areas and brought down artillery fire to silence the two positions. The column kept moving through the left bank of the Hyderabad Nallah alongside the hill, before crossing over to the pass side and then starting the ascent. At about 1730 hours, two hours after the column had started the march, heavy rains began, making movement very difficult. By 1900 hours, it was completely dark. Major Dyal decided to continue climbing towards the pass despite the adverse conditions. As the troops were climbing, they came across what looked like an abandoned house but in reality was a shelter for infiltrators. In a swift action, 1 Para troops captured 10 members of the Azad Kashmir militia—a kind of paramilitary force—along with one LMG and 10 rifles. The captured prisoners were gainfully utilised to carry the extra load of the column, mainly rations and fuel. As the troops reached the Uri–Poonch road, 10 km below the pass, it was already 0430 hours on the 28th. Major Dyal decided to give a much-needed two-hour break to the soldiers, though it meant they had to rest in pouring rain, which accentuated the cold.

At 0700 hours, the column resumed the march. In another two hours, it was barely 700 metres short of the pass. Pakistani troops, perched atop the peak, were surprised to see the column. They had perhaps thought that the Indians had abandoned the attack due to the heavy rain the previous night. As the surprised Pakistanis opened up with an MMG from the western shoulder of the pass and with LMGs and other small arms from the pass itself, Major Dyal had to think of outwitting them.

After assessing the Pakistani defence on the pass, Major Dyal tasked two platoons to climb the steep spurs from the western side of the pass, silence the MMG, and then roll down to the main defences. The supremely fit and confident paratroopers did the job well, surprising the Pakistanis. As the rest of the column fetched up, the Pakistanis could not withstand the twin attacks and withdrew to a feature west of the pass.

By 1000 hours on 28 August, Haji Pir was in India's control, thanks to the daring daylight attack by 1 Para troops under the bold leadership of Major RS Dyal. It was to prove a major turning point in the 1965 war. The main infiltration route was now plugged from one side, but more importantly, the morale of the Indian army was sky-high following two major successes in Kargil and this one in Haji Pir against formidable odds. Remember, these battle victories had come less than three years after the humiliation against China.

Capturing Haji Pir was, however, only a partial completion of the overall plan. The Pakistanis were known to counter-attack swiftly, so both Haji Pir and its surroundings had to be secured. As expected, the Pakistanis did counter-attack on the 29 August but it was repulsed by the brave and efficient paratroopers. To further consolidate their position, 1 Para captured Ring Contour on 30 August and the ad-

joining Point 8786 a day later.

For his courage, innovativeness and leadership in capturing the Haji Pir pass despite very adverse conditions, Major RS Dyal was awarded the Maha Vir Chakra.

Brigadier Shamsheer recalls: ‘There was one small incident I cannot forget. When 1 Para was going for its assault, I had sent a detachment of signals headed by Havaldar Pillai, along with a couple of radio sets that were short of batteries. I had told the signals men not to use the high-frequency radio set unnecessarily and to conserve the battery. I will call you, you don’t call, was my instruction. Yet, Havaldar Pillai called on the radio set after 1 Para had secured Haji Pir. I scolded him for wasting the battery. He replied, “There is no problem, sir.” When I asked him to explain, Havaldar Pillai, pleased as punch, said, “Sir, the Pakis have left behind many radio sets in full working condition, besides a lot of petrol and several tins of desi ghee!”’

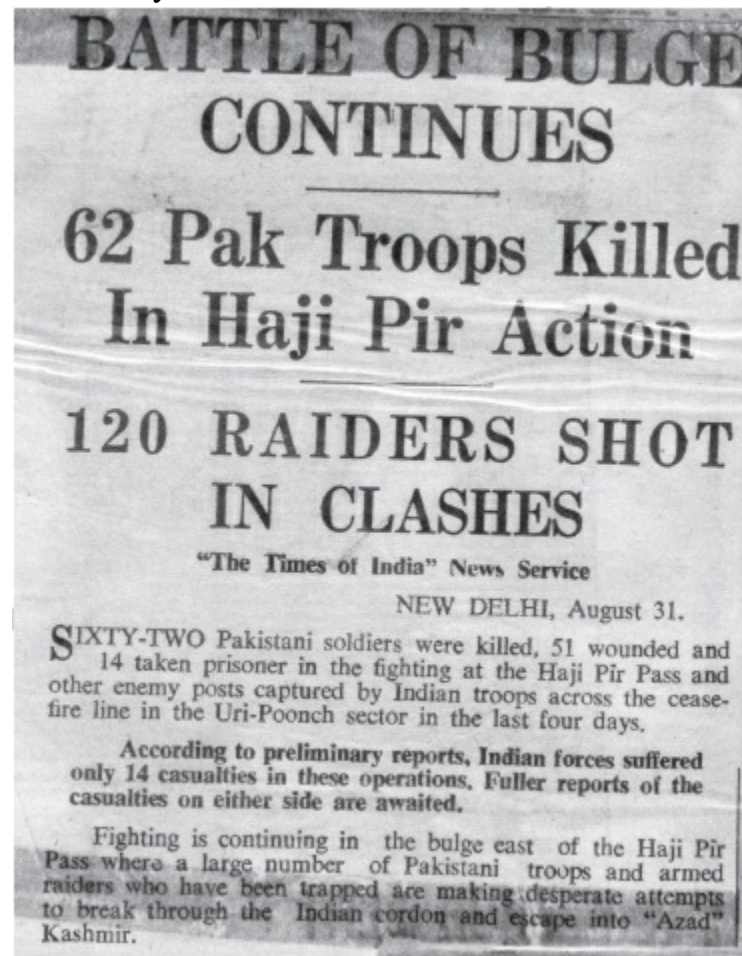


Indian tricolour atop the Haji Pir Pass

Meanwhile, Bedori was still unconquered. Two attempts, by 19 Punjab on 25 August and by 4 Rajput on 27 August, had failed. Brigadier Bakshi and his battalion commanders realised they had no option but to assault the Bedori peak through the Bedori springs in the north-east.

So, after reaching a place called Heman Buniyar at 0715 hours on 28 August, the battalion moved to the Bedori springs, already secured by a neighbouring battalion, 7 Bihar, and prepared for the final assault. At 0330 hours on 29 August, 19 Punjab crossed the forming-up place for the assault on Bedori. It involved a steep

climb of nearly 600 metres. In less than three hours of fierce hand-to-hand combat as well as a firefight, Bedori was captured. The B and C companies played a major part in securing victory, with the support of a 3.7-inch mountain gun, which had apparently arrived just the previous night. Its firepower not only destroyed the Pakistani sangars (temporary bunkers) but also shattered the morale of the Pakistani troops. After securing Bedori, 19 Punjab moved through Kunthar di Gali and linked up with 1 Para on 1 September. The CO of 19 Punjab, Lieutenant Colonel Sampuran Singh, was awarded Maha Vir Chakra for his dauntless spirit, exceptional leadership and bravery.



Report of the Haji Pir battle in the press



Lt Gen Harbakhsh visits Haji Pir

On the whole, had it not been for the bold leadership of Brigadier Bakshi (after whom the operation was named), Haji Pir would not have been secured as quickly. For his bold, unconventional leadership, Brigadier Bakshi was awarded the Maha Vir Chakra.

His job, however, was only half done. Operation Bakshi was one component of General Harbakhsh Singh's overall plan to capture the Haji Pir bulge, tackling the northern part of the bulge. On the southern end, two massive features dominated the old Poonch–Uri road that ran through the Haji Pir pass. Known locally as Raja and Chand Tekri (and also colloquially as Rani, as it was slightly less formidable than Raja), Pakistani troops had turned these two areas into virtual fortresses. As per General Harbakhsh's estimate, the combined strength on these two features was a battalion less a company, supported by two 3.7-inch howitzers (similar to the gun we saw Lieutenant Colonel Sampuran Singh use so effectively against Bedori defences), two 81mm mortars, eight .30 Browning machine guns, and other auto-

matic weapons. The enemy bunkers were well fortified, with overhead protection against artillery shelling, and obstacles like mines and barbed wire to deter assaulting infantry.

These two formidable positions served as key staging posts for infiltrators being pushed across the CFL by Pakistan. It was necessary to capture these two positions to complete the task started by 1 Para and 19 Punjab, namely the capture of the Haji Pir bulge, and deny infiltration bases to Pakistan. This task had been allotted by General Harbakhsh to 93 Infantry Brigade, commanded by Brigadier Zora Singh, under 25 Infantry Division, commanded by Major General Amreek Singh.

When, on 24 August, General Harbakhsh flew into Rajouri, Major General Amreek informed him that he could not muster enough troops to attack Raja and Chand Tekri, and that he had obtained permission from XV Corps to bypass these features in the link-up with 68 Brigade. The implication of this was that it would leave pockets of enemy troops sitting on dominating mountain features within the bulge. These troops would be a constant threat to any movement within the bulge by own troops. Also, they could possibly continue to function as staging posts for infiltration. The capture of the bulge itself would thus be meaningless unless the enemy was thrown out of these two features.



Lt Gen Harbakhsh with his officers under a fluttering tricolour at Haji Pir

The army commander told them in no uncertain terms that both the features were to be captured at all costs. The hesitation had already cost them valuable time, and there was no way that the attacks on these could take place simultaneously with the operations of 68 Brigade from north. The deadline for capture of Raja and Chand Tekri was extended to 3 September, and the army commander agreed to allot one more battalion, 2 Sikh, to 93 Brigade for the operation.

Operation Faulad

So, a new deadline for the capture of Raja and Chand Tekri was set and Operation Faulad (see [map 6](#)) planned. It was going to be 3 September, two days after 1 Para had consolidated its hold over Haji Pir. Meanwhile, as mentioned, General Harbakhsh agreed to allot one more battalion, 2 Sikh, to 93 Brigade for the operation.

On 1 September, Brigadier Zora Singh issued orders to his battalions tasked with the capture of Raja and Chand Tekri. The operation was to take place in two phases. In Phase I, 3 Dogra would begin its attack at 2130 hours on 2 September and capture Raja, with 2 Sikh as its reserve, by 2359 hours. In Phase II, 2 Sikh would capture Chand Tekri by 1000 hours on 3 September. It would have 3 Dogra and one company, 3 Rajputana Rifles (Raj Rif), in reserve.

On 2 and 3 September, the two units began their attack only to be repulsed and surprised. It was not until 4 September that another attempt was decided on. The new plan now formulated reversed the objectives, with 2 Sikh attacking Raja and 3 Dogra, Chand Tekri. Also, both the attacks were to take place simultaneously instead of being staggered, as planned earlier.

Lieutenant Colonel NN Khanna, CO of 2 Sikh, carried out a detailed reconnaissance to study the objective before formulating his plan. He could make out that the Raja feature actually consisted of two heights, which he called left height and right height. These were strongly held by the enemy, and Colonel Khanna felt it would be better to attack both simultaneously. This would deny the enemy the opportunity of concentrating his fire from both these heights to one column.

To aid his planning further, Colonel Khanna decided to send reconnaissance patrols to probe the enemy defences. In a daring venture across the CFL, right up to the enemy positions, the patrols led by Captain Anup Dharni and Havaldar Ujagar Singh stealthily closed in and took stock of the routes and obstacles. They even managed to draw enemy fire by throwing a stone in their direction, which gave them a good idea about where all the automatic weapons were deployed.

It's best to let General Harbakhsh describe what happened that night. He writes: 'In the intervening night of 5 and 6 September, the battle opened with an intense artillery bombardment, but it had little effect on the built-up positions. The approach to the objectives lay along steep and slippery slopes, and very often the assaulting troops had to crawl on all fours. And as they approached the post, they were met by searing sweeps of automatic fire. The assaulting troops wavered momentarily, bewildered by the intensity of the enemy fire, for they had been told that the posts would be effectively neutralised by artillery fire. Inspired by bold leadership, however, the leading waves quickly recovered to dash through the mines and wire and were soon locked in a grim hand-to-hand battle for over two hours, before the pickets fell. The defenders fought with determination. On Raja, the garrison

fought to the last man. The casualties on our side were heavy too. Amongst the dead were Major GC Verma and Captain GS Bawa, of the Dogras, who fell while personally leading the assaulting wave. The intrepid commanding officer of 2 Sikh, Lieutenant Colonel NN Khanna, was also fatally wounded as he led his battalion into the attack. For this act of bravery, he was awarded the Maha Vir Chakra.'

An extract from Lieutenant Colonel Khanna's citation reveals the fibre of which this officer was made. 'I am sure 2 Sikh is going to capture Raja today' were the brave words with which he led the assault. By this time he had already been wounded by an enemy grenade. Undaunted, he led the final assault that succeeded in capturing the objective. However, while doing so, he received a burst of .50 Browning, as a result of which he was severely wounded; he later succumbed to his injuries. But for this officer's personal bravery, cool courage, grim determination and leadership of the most exceptional order, this enemy stronghold would not have been captured.

Why Gibraltar Failed

With the fall of Raja and Chand Tekri, the back of Gibraltar Force was broken in this sector. Thereafter, Indian troops faced little difficulty in mopping up and liquidating the remaining pockets of resistance in the area. The link-up was completed with the capture of Kahuta on 10 September 1965. With that, the Indian security forces closed the mouth of the bulge and sealed the Haji Pir sector. Consequently, the enemy resistance east of the Betar Nallah was brought to a stop.

Yet, as the road from Haji Pir Pass to Kahuta followed a nallah that joined Betar Nallah at Kahuta, it was important to secure the heights on both sides of the nallah in order to eliminate any interference. This mopping-up was comparatively easy along the eastern ridge but was more difficult along the western ridge line. The most difficult feature to capture was Gitian on the western ridge line. The 6 Dogra battalion – a newly raised unit – captured it after very heavy and determined fighting on 22 September, just before the ceasefire came into effect. With that, Pakistan's gamble to trigger unrest and uprising in Jammu and Kashmir collapsed spectacularly.

The Misreading and the Mistakes

Although the infiltrators succeeded in tying down a large number of Indian security forces in Kashmir and creating a grave situation for India, by and large they did not succeed in their overall mission. There are several possible reasons for this failure.

While launching Gibraltar, Pakistan made a grave mistake in assessing the ground realities inside the state. The expected open support from Kashmiri locals never materialised. A large majority of the people were not impressed by Pakistan's empty anti-India propaganda. Even pro-Pakistani political parties did not come out in open support of the infiltrators. As General Harbakhsh notes, 'The

failure of the infiltrator (*sic*) campaign exploded the myth created by Pak(istan) and assiduously propagated at home and abroad that the Kashmiris were impatiently waiting to be “liberated”.’

Pakistan’s army circles who had openly debated the issue subsequently stated that Kashmiri leaders were not taken into confidence in the matter with a view to preserving the secrecy of the operation. Pakistan feared that if the plan was divulged to Kashmiri leaders, they might inform the Indian authorities. Eventually, when the operation began, it took the Kashmiri leaders by surprise and they refused to extend help to the infiltrators. General Harbakhsh says: ‘In fact, the success of the anti-infiltration campaign is attributable in a large measure to the reluctance of the locals to cooperate with the infiltrators.’

The morale of the Mujahids and the Razakars, who formed about 70 per cent of the force, seemed to have been affected by their involuntary role or forced conscription. Quite a few of them slipped back into Pakistan-occupied Kashmir at the first opportunity. Inadequate administrative cover to the infiltrators may also have led to low morale and desertions. They were generally found wanting on courage and determination. There were a large number of desertions, particularly in the northern area.

When the Indian forces sealed the entry and the exit points, the infiltrators lost contact with their central base camp and found themselves lost in a hostile land. Bajwa writes about the reaction at the highest levels of the Pakistani Army on losing Haji Pir: ‘It may have taken four days but the capture of Haji Pir Pass was a serious blow for Pakistan as it left the Gibraltar Force within Indian-controlled Kashmir (ICK) isolated and with potentially no route from which to exit. It is reported that on news of the capture of the pass, (Pakistan’s Commander-in-Chief General Mohammad) Musa rushed to (Foreign Minister Zulfikar Ali) Bhutto’s residence and by means of a map demonstrated how it left the Gibraltar Force isolated, and shouted, “My boys have nothing but stones to fight with.”’

Later, General Musa in his book *My Version: India-Pakistan War 1965* explained the circumstances under which the entire Operation Gibraltar was initially conceived and planned. ‘The then Foreign Minister Mr Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, and Foreign Secretary Aziz Ahmed, spurred on by Major General Akhtar Hussain Malik, who was commander of our troops in Azad Kashmir, pressed the government to take advantage of the disturbed situation in the valley.’ General Musa says he was given a concrete proposal for an enlarged operation in Kashmir with which he did not agree. Instead, he recommended that the raids be postponed so that the time thus gained could be utilised for making proper arrangements for not only guerrilla activities in Kashmir but also building up the Pakistani Army’s capacity for an open war. General Musa says one of his own divisional commanders and the foreign office experts proceeded with the planning and actual launching of Gibralt-

tar, contrary to his professional judgement. In a telling comment, General Musa writes: 'The policymakers thwarted the professional assessment and advice on matters having grave military implications because of their miscalculation of the politico-strategic situation and the over-ambitiousness of a few individuals involved in decision making who were prompted by their desire to achieve some quick and spectacular results in Kashmir by clandestine operations.'

Fifty years on, it is difficult to believe that the Pakistani Army—currently considered to be the 'deep state' and perhaps the final arbiter of the nation's destiny—could have been overruled by a politician. It is worth examining if one of the reasons for Bhutto's hanging by a military dictator (Zia-ul-Haq) was because of his role in overruling the army during the 1965 war.

There are others, however, who blame General Musa for not being firm. A Pakistani general, Lieutenant General M Habibullah Khan Khattak, wrote in a rejoinder to General Musa's book (available in the IDSA's *Strategic Digest*, July 1984): 'The army commander-in-chief (General Musa) failed to advise the president that on military grounds the general staff (of army HQs) were opposed to Operation Gibraltar, under the impression that the president was in favour of sending the raiders. It is believed by some independent observers in Pakistan that it was the absence of a clear-cut opposition from his C-in-C to the operational soundness of Gibraltar that led President Ayub Khan to give the go-ahead signal.'

Pakistan in 1965 also forgot that guerrilla warfare needed a cadre of highly motivated leaders and men who were natives of the land. The Pakistani guerrillas were outsiders and the locals had no affinity with them. Most of them did not know the Kashmiri language and the metric system of the state. As mixing with the locals was an insurmountable problem, many of them were handed over to Indian authorities by the Kashmiri people.

The infiltration was backed by a cry of jihad. But the poor people who were forced to carry the cross of jihad across the border hardly understood its meaning. A majority of them did not even know about the nature of their mission.

On the whole, though, the biggest reason behind the failure of the Pakistan adventure was the quick and firm retaliation of the Indian security forces. The recapture of the Kargil heights, the vigorous operations in the Tithwal sector, and the successful conduct of operations Bakshi and Faulad broke the backbone of the Gibraltar Force. However, these operations also kept four Indian divisions tied down in Jammu and Kashmir in mopping up the infiltrators during the crucial month of September 1965. Had these divisions been available to fight the Pakistanis in Punjab, the result of the Indo-Pak war of 1965 would have been different. In fact, it was Operation Gibraltar that led to the Indo-Pak war of 1965. The failure in Kashmir prompted Pakistan to make a try in the Chhamb-Jaurian sector, thereby forcing India to retaliate by opening new fronts in Punjab and Rajasthan.

The last word on why Gibraltar failed perhaps comes from a British military publication. Bajwa quotes an opinion in the *British Military Review* of May 1966 which said in a telling comment: ‘Pakistani planning and execution of Gibraltar was in effect “calling heads” with a double-headed coin. If all went well and there was a full-scale revolt, Pakistan could claim that it was an indigenous revolt, and if it went badly, the prolonged guerrilla war would help convince the international powers to intervene in order to prevent an all-out war.’

A Daring Thrust that Fell Short

Blundering Pakistan Leadership

As Gibraltar failed, there was real pressure in Pakistan's GHQ to launch Major General Malik's second phase of the operation, already codenamed Operation Grand Slam. The Pakistani brass felt that if the Indian Army was allowed to have a free hand for much longer in dealing with the Gibraltar Force and capturing posts across the CFL, there would be much answering to do. According to retired brigadier of Pakistani Army Gulzar Ahmed, 'As a result of Indian offensive (*sic*) in Kashmir, the president of Pakistan in consultation with the C-in-C (General Muhammad Musa), Pakistani Army, decided to undertake offensive operations and to attack the enemy in Chhamb and Jaurian.'

Bajwa quotes an interesting episode in this context. While Musa was still not fully convinced about the efficacy of the plan, Bhutto was all for it. As the Gibraltar Force was disintegrating, Ayub had left the capital for Swat. Bhutto, who seemed to have some kind of sway over Ayub, flew to Swat to get Ayub's clearance for Grand Slam. He had, as foreign minister, already written to Ayub, advising him, 'Time is therefore of the essence in striking a few hard blows against India in Kashmir.' This was despite the setback vis-à-vis Gibraltar.

So, Bhutto met Ayub in Swat and obtained in writing the president's clearance for Operation Grand Slam. Remember, it was just a day after Haji Pir had fallen into Indian hands, and the Gibraltar Force was on the verge of collapse.

Bajwa says, 'Ayub's directive to give the green light was odd for a number of reasons, not least because it was addressed to the foreign minister and [not] the commander-in-chief...'

The aim, according to the document, was 'to take such action that will defreeze the Kashmir problem, weaken Indian resolve, and bring her to the conference table without provoking a general war. However, an element of escalation is always present in such struggles. So, whilst confining our action to the Kashmir area, we must not be unmindful that India may in desperation involve us in a general war or violate Pakistani territory where we are weak. We must, therefore, be prepared for such a contingency. To expect quick results in this struggle when India has much larger forces than us would be unrealistic. Therefore our action should be such that can be sustained over a long period. As a general rule, Hindu morale would not stand more than a couple of hard blows at the right time and place. Such opportunities must therefore be sought and exploited.'

This major attack was intended to capture or destroy the Akhnoor bridge, some 40 km from the CFL inside Indian territory. This would have cut off Naushera, Rajouri and Poonch from Jammu and Pathankot as the Jammu-Rajouri road passed

over this bridge. Consequently, the Indian forces stationed in the northwestern sectors of the J&K front would have been isolated. Grand Slam intended to make a second thrust towards Jammu, which was just 30 km from Akhnoor. Should Jammu also fall to invading forces, the land communication with the Indian forces stationed in Jammu and Kashmir would be snapped and the forces isolated. By taking control of Jammu, Ayub could have dictated terms in any subsequent negotiations. At least that was the grand plan and it did succeed to an extent because Indian deployment under 191 Infantry Brigade was thin on the ground.

The Chhamb–Jaurian area chosen by Pakistan to launch the offensive with a massive armour-cum-infantry force was bounded in the west by the CFL and in the south by mostly flat fields upto the international border. The Kalidhar Range formed its northern bounds and the river Munnawar Tawi was the only water obstacle in this sector—though it was only a partial tank obstacle since the river was fordable during dry weather. The Pakistani planners had to carefully choose the area where they would apply the full force of the newly-acquired armoured force since it had short communication lines with its main bases in Sialkot and Kharian. Even General Harbakhsh conceded that Pakistan had chosen the place of attack with excellent appreciation of the extant situation. He writes: ‘The area for this fresh aggression was chosen with care. For while the river Chenab provided effective right-flank security to the Pakistani offensive, this formidable water obstacle, spanned only by Akhnoor bridge (Class 18), imposed serious logistical handicap on our operations. Moreover, whereas Pakistani armour had virtually complete freedom of manoeuvre in its approach to our defences, the lay of terrain in our area restricted the use of own tanks. Further, the enemy’s bases for reinforcement and administrative support were close at hand. Ours, on the other hand, were at the end of long, vulnerable and tenuous lines of communication, parallel to the international border.’



An aerial view of the Chhamb area



The Kalidhar Ridge from the air

Due to the restrictions placed by the Karachi Accord on the number of troops

that could be deployed by both sides in J&K, Indian troops were thinly spread whereas Pakistan could concentrate its power within its territory without violating the accord.

Interestingly, General Harbakhsh and his team were cognisant of the dangers of a Pakistan thrust through Chhamb. He notes: ‘The possibility of Pakistan selecting the Chhamb area for a major offensive had exercised my mind for the past few days... so, on 30 August I thought it prudent to alert the forces in Chhamb sector and advised general officer commanding, XV Corps, telephonically for an adjustment of troop dispositions to ensure its (Akhnoor bridge) security. Early on 31 August, I sent a personal signal to general officer commanding, XV Corps, confirming my apprehensions of the previous day, and recommended the holding of bridgeheads covering Chhamb and Mandiala crossings in strength, against any thrust by Pakistani regular troops supported by armour, even at the expense of thinning out border posts... As far as I recollect, there was no reaction to these warnings...’

As coincidence would have it, on 31 August, Chief of Army Staff General JN Chaudhuri was holding a conference in Srinagar with GOC 15 Corps, Lieutenant General KS Katoch, taking stock of the situation along with Director of Military Operations (DMO) Brigadier Narendra Singh. This conference, says General Harbakhsh, ‘gives an interesting insight into our lack of grasp of the situation barely 24 hours before Pakistan launched her major offensive. During this conference, the chief of the army staff defined the future tasks of 15 Corps in the following order of priority: (a) to hunt out infiltrators; (b) to complete the Uri–Poonch linkup; and (c) to be prepared for an offensive by Pakistan. The corps commander, accepting the above tasks, requested permission to tackle them in whichever order he found expedient. He stated that he had for the time being accorded priority to the Uri–Poonch link-up.’

As it turned out, no one anticipated the massive Pakistani thrust into Chhamb. Even Defence Minister YB Chavan, who kept a detailed diary of the events leading up to and during the 1965 war, referred to this conference and the decision at the end of it, all of which were reproduced in the book *1965 War: The Inside Story*, brought out by RD Pradhan, his private secretary during that time. He writes: ‘Strangely, at the end of discussions on 31 August, the assessment was that instead of attacking in the Chhamb area, the enemy was likely to intensify infiltration campaign in the general area of Jhangar–Naushera. In consequence, 15 Corps’ task was redefined. That was an incorrect appreciation and was apparently based on faulty intelligence.’

General Harbakhsh too conceded the shortcoming: ‘We must admit, however reluctantly, that Pakistan scored one over us in keeping us guessing regarding the timing and area of her intended offensive even up to the eleventh hour. Our intelli-

gence service had once again failed to penetrate the fog of war.’

The lapse was all the more glaring, in retrospect, since the preparations made by the Pakistanis for this thrust towards Chhamb could not be concealed and the United Nations observers (who used to be stationed on the border in those days and were not as irrelevant as they may be now) had warned the Indian authorities of the impending attack in this sector. The warning, according to official history, was not taken seriously, and no efforts were made to take adequate counter-measures.

The Indian armed strength in the sector remained at about 3,000 men, mainly lightly armed police. The area was under the operational command of 191 Infantry Brigade, which was responsible for its security. The brigade had made the following security arrangements in the Chhamb area: HQ 191 Brigade at Mandiala crossing; 6 Sikh LI along CFL from Burejal to Pir Jamal; 3 Mahar North of 6 Sikh LI; 15 Kumaon in area Mandiala; 6/5 Gorkha Rifles in general area Kalidhar; one tank squadron (AMX- 13 tanks) of 20 Lancers west of Mandiala; and under-strength 14 Field Regiment in Chhamb and one battery at Dhak Baniyar.

Pakistan, on the other hand, concentrated heavy firepower for the offensive, with the Indians taking note of the concentration. Three brigades and two armoured regiments were assigned to the offensive. They were: 11 Cavalry and 13 Lancers; Artillery 4 Corps; 102 Brigade; and 10 Infantry Brigade and divisional artillery.

At 0330 hours on 1 September, Pakistani artillery opened Grand Slam (see [map 7](#)) with an intense bombardment that continued for over an hour, until the tanks were ready to launch the thrust. General Harbakhsh describes the opening hours in vivid detail: ‘They shelled all our forward posts along the ceasefire line and engaged with heavy artillery fire in the villages of Mandiala and Chhamb, as also the Mandiala crossing. The gun areas came in for special attention. The staggering weight of artillery fire continued up to 0630 hours. Under the cover of this massive firepower, the enemy launched a three-pronged attack with a force estimated to be a division of infantry and two regiments of armour... At approximately 0830 hours, the Pakistanis made a thrust with a squadron of Pattons supported by infantry...another probing attack was made with a squadron of Shermans... Our own squadron of 20 Lancers reacted sharply to these armour thrusts and managed to halt the enemy by some good shooting. Approximately 10 enemy tanks were claimed to have been knocked out...’

The bravery of one man stood out that afternoon. Major Bhaskar Roy was commanding the C Squadron of the regiment under 191 Brigade. The Pakistani armoured attack comprised two regiments of medium tanks, M-48 Pattons and M-36 tank destroyers. During the initial phase of the attack, Roy destroyed 6 Pattons and 3 recoilless guns, and captured a jeep. A second attack was launched by Pakistani armour at 1100 hours and strongly contested by the AMX-13s of 20 Lancers, which, despite being outgunned and outnumbered, destroyed a total of 13 tanks

that day and prevented the encirclement of 191 Infantry Brigade.

For the courageous defence of Chhamb–Jaurian, the regiment was awarded a theatre honour and Major Bhaskar Roy was awarded the Maha Vir Chakra for his heroic action and leadership. His citation read: ‘In September 1965, when Pakistani forces attacked our positions in the Chhamb Sector with a large number of tanks, Major Bhaskar Roy was commanding a squadron of an armoured corps regiment in that area. Undaunted by overwhelming and superior enemy armour, Major Roy employed his armour boldly and skilfully, stemmed the enemy advance, and foiled the enemy’s attempts to encircle the bridge. In the tank-to-tank battle, Major Roy destroyed 13 enemy tanks and disabled several others. Throughout this operation, Major Roy displayed conspicuous bravery and leadership of a very high order in the best traditions of the Indian Army.’

Meanwhile, 3 Mahar battalion was caught in a peculiar situation. Originally a machine-gun battalion, it was converted into a standard infantry battalion on 1 March 1964. It came under the command of 191 Infantry Brigade and was moved to Jaurian. In its new role, the battalion had to prevent infiltration across the CFL as well as protect civilian life and property on the Indian side. The battalion remained in the Dewa sector on the ceasefire line up to the end of July 1965. Then it received orders to prepare for its move to 7 Mountain Brigade at Ambala, and consequently be concentrated at Akhnoor. The unit was to be replaced by 2 Sikh battalion, which had arrived at Akhnoor.

As per plan, 3 Mahar had handed over all its supporting weapons and vehicles to 2 Sikh, exchanged small arms and radio sets with the relieving unit, and sent out an advance party to Ambala. Nearly a quarter of its original strength was sent on leave when the Pakistani infiltrators started pouring into J&K in August 1965. So 3 Mahar was told to stay put and deal with the infiltrators.

On 7 August, the A Company set out in pursuit of a group of infiltrators and after three days of chase, managed to kill four of them while taking 4 leaders and 10 men prisoner, and capturing a considerable amount of arms, ammunition and equipment. The A Company had been without food, water and any replenishment of ammunition for two days during this action.

After the unfortunate death of the 191 Brigade commander, Brigadier JF Masters, in the artillery shelling from across the border, 3 Mahar under their Commanding Officer Lieutenant Colonel GS Sangha established themselves at the Mandiala Heights, blocked the infiltrators’ route towards Jaurian, and thereby stabilised the situation. The battalion’s B Company stormed the Pakistani posts at Nathan and Maira under heavy artillery and small-arms fire. A determined assault by one platoon forced the enemy of approximately two sections at Maira to withdraw. Subsequently, the battalion was ordered on 17 August to recapture own posts at Laliali, which it promptly did with great courage and planning. It had some

backup from a company of 3 J&K Militia, mostly comprising of locals. As the tempo of infiltration slowed down, the unit started preparing to move out to Ambala according to the earlier plan.

On 1 September, when the fresh Pakistani offensive began, the company of 3 J&K Militia reported tank noise and infantry forming up for attack in front of their locality to 3 Mahar of which they were part of. At 0845 hours, the company commander of 3 J&K Militia again reported that tanks had started firing on to his posts and that his locality might be attacked any time now. At 0900 hours, communication with this company snapped. By 0930 hours, one squadron of Pakistani armour started firing on the Mahar battalion's C Company's locality, while another squadron started bypassing the C Company from the south and moved towards Dewa. The 3 Mahar battalion had no recoilless guns, having handed these over to 2 Sikh. Urgent requests to the brigade headquarters for medium-artillery support did not materialise. A troop of armour promised to the battalion did not turn up. The battalion was asked to await close air support, which did not arrive either.

Left in the open with no artillery or air support and RCL guns, while enemy tanks tried to encircle them, the battalion still put up a strong resistance and foiled all destructive attempts of the Pakistan Army. However, during this reorganisation, the C Company was unable to make a clean break with the enemy armour. As a result, four jawans were wounded and two taken prisoner. And yet, the quick readjustment, the hard digging, and the determined fight put up by the battalion, despite the lack of support from air, armour and artillery, on 1 September and subsequent days saved this subsector from falling into enemy hands.

The next day, on 2 September, the advancing Pakistanis attacked Lalliali in strength, supported by a troop of armour and very heavy artillery fire. The A Company held its fire till the enemy infantry was within 250 yards of the post and thereafter opened up with a section of MMGs, a section of 3 inch mortars and small arms, creating havoc amongst the assaulting Pakistani troops. The attacking Pakistani column had to withdraw, leaving behind 11 killed. The Mahar company also lost two soldiers, including the company's second-in-command, and had two wounded in this action. Subedar Dhondiba Londhe and Sepoy Babu Dhere were posthumously awarded the Sena Medal and 'mention-in-dispatches', respectively, for their bold action and sacrifice.

At about 2000 hours the same day, the battalion, having lost communication with the brigade, received orders to be under the command of 9 Punjab, delay the enemy as long as possible and then withdraw to Kalidhar. During the night, the Lalliali post was attacked again. The post had run low on mortar ammunition. Without any artillery support, it was impossible to hold on to the post. Finding no other alternative, the A Company was withdrawn.

Elsewhere, the Pakistanis were smashing through India's weak defences in this

sector and were getting threateningly close to the 191 Brigade HQ itself. By nightfall on 1 September, it had in fact succeeded in driving a wedge between Mandiala and Chhamb. A little later, they pushed 10 tanks across the Munnawar Tawi. Simultaneously with the attack in the plains area, the Pakistanis also made a thrust in the hill section of the Chhamb sector and captured Red Hill and Green Ridge pickets held by 3 J&K Militia.

In Delhi, Defence Minister YB Chavan was completely unaware of the attack. In fact, in the routine morning meeting he had with the chiefs and his civilian staff, the adjutant general, Lieutenant General PP Kumarmangalam, who was representing the army that day (because COAS General Chaudhuri was away in Srinagar), told the minister that it would take at least 16 more days for Pakistan to retaliate after its Gibraltar debacle.

Yet, in less than two hours after the meeting was over, Chavan, who was visiting a hospital, was informed by Defence Secretary PVR Rao that Pakistan had launched a massive attack in the Chhamb sector.

Chavan's diary entry of 1 September reads: 'Returned to office at 1 pm...fixed up further briefing in the Ops room, after COAS' return in the afternoon. By 4.45 pm, COAS and CAS (chief of air staff) had hurried consultation for a few minutes and came to me for orders for use of air force in the Chhamb sector against tanks... Had no time to consult ECC (Emergency Committee of the Cabinet) or prime minister. Time was of vital factor. Took decision on their advice and asked them to go ahead.'

PVR Rao also confirmed the circumstances under which the decision was taken. In his words, 'When the Pakistani attack came through, General Chaudhuri was in Srinagar. He returned to Delhi at about 4.30 pm and came straight to the defence minister's room, where a meeting was in progress. As he walked in, the general asked for immediate air support, stating that he had just come from Pathankot and the air force officer there was getting the aircraft ready. Air Marshal Arjan Singh agreed without hesitation to go to army support, only pointing out that in attacks launched without adequate preparation, losses must be accepted and that pilots might make mistakes between friend and foe. The defence minister agreed that the attack may go in forthwith.'

Chavan approved the use of air force around 4.50 pm. By 5.19 pm, the first sortie of Vampires and Mystères took off from Pathankot and gave a tough fight to the Pakistani F-96 Sabre jets. But as predicted by Air Marshal Arjan Singh, it was difficult for the IAF pilots to quickly distinguish between friend and foe; in some places they ended up inflicting more damage on Indian assets. At the same time, the introduction of the air force also staggered the Pakistani advance. DR Mankekar, renowned defence journalist and author of *22 Fateful Days: Pakistan Cut to Size*, writes: 'The enemy was taken completely by surprise. He did not at all

expect India would introduce her air force in the fighting. Before the hectic day closed, the IAF fighters had knocked out 13 tanks and five others were hit by ground fire. Eleven of them were actually seen burning. In addition, 30 to 40 vehicles of the enemy were also destroyed...'

General Harbakhsh had a different take: 'The air force responded promptly but did little damage to the enemy except imposing caution—instead, they took a heavy toll on our own forces: all the artillery ammunition vehicles and one armour ammunition vehicle were destroyed; three AMX tanks and one armoured recovery vehicle were also damaged.'

The use of the air force notwithstanding, the Pakistanis had continued to advance and by 1800 hours had succeeded in driving a wedge between Mandiala and Chhamb. By 2200 hours, they crossed over to the eastern bank of Munnawar Tawi with 10 tanks. As detailed earlier, two pickets at Green Ridge and Red Hill, held by 3 J&K Militia, were overrun. The advance threatened the HQ of 191 Brigade itself. Had it not been for a remarkable performance by the 15 Kumaon battalion, the Brigade HQ would also have fallen that evening. The recoilless gun that the Kumaonis used destroyed the leading Pakistani tank and also knocked out the barrel of the next tank, leading the Pakistanis to conclude that there were more recoilless guns in the vicinity. Fearing further damage, the Pakistani tanks turned southwards. By that time, however, most other Indian posts had fallen or been encircled, and many had been taken prisoners.

By 2100 hours, finding no other alternative but to retreat, the 191 Brigade HQ along with 6 Sikh LI, 15 Kumaon, 14 Field Regiment and the surviving elements of the C Squadron of 20 Lancers withdrew to Jaurian. All of them left behind heavy equipment.

However, 3 Mahar and two companies of 3 J&K Militia, and 6/5 Gorkha Rifles, which had put up a valiant fight in the daytime, were asked to stay put at Kalidhar.

As the 191 Brigade withdrew backwards, 10 Infantry Division came into play. This division, now permanently located at Akhnoor, was in the process of being raised in August 1965 at Bangalore and Belgaum. In fact, on 25 August when it was decided at army HQ to move 10 Infantry division into J&K, its headquarter strength was barely 30 per cent of what a normal division had in those years. Major General DB Chopra, the first GOC of 10 Division, was given a briefing at army HQ and told to report to 15 Corps HQ at Udhampur, which he did on 28 August, barely four days before the Pakistani onslaught. During his briefing at 15 Corps HQ, Major General Chopra was told that the 10 Infantry Division would be assuming the responsibility of the 191 and 80 brigades but not before 15 September. Little did they know then that a massive Pakistani attack was coming in less than a week!

On 1 September, even as the Pakistani offensive had commenced, Major General Chopra, in order to acquaint himself with his future area of responsibility, was on a tour of the 80 Brigade sector when he was informed by brigadier general staff (BGS) of 15 Corps about the Chhamb development. Within an hour, as the 191 Brigade collapsed, Major General Chopra was told by GOC 15 Corps to assume operational command of the brigade's area of responsibility. He was told that 41 Mountain Brigade (which only had two battalions under it instead of the normal three) would also be placed under 10 Infantry Division. Its main task would be to stem the Pakistani offensive and defend Akhnoor bridge and the Kalidhar complex. More troops were being rushed: 6 Rajput was told to defend Akhnoor bridge; 20 Lancers was moved from Pathankot and placed under 41 Mountain Brigade at Jaurian; and 28 Infantry Brigade with its full complement of units—2 Grenadiers, 5/8 Gorkha Rifles and 1/1 Gorkha Rifles—was moved from Pathankot to Damana and was kept as reserve corps, although 1/1 Gorkha Rifles was moved to Chauki Chaura to protect the road between Akhnoor and Sundarbani.

On 2 September, Major General Chopra placed 41 Infantry Brigade in the intermediate position between Jaurian and Troiti but appreciated the fact that it may not be able to withstand the onslaught for too long. Yet, even as Indian forces were being reorganised and defences were being placed around Akhnoor bridge, the expected Pakistani assault never came. The mystery was solved long after the war was over.

Bajwa offers the full details: 'It was in the early afternoon of 2 September that one of the most controversial incidents of the war took place. With Akhnoor within reach and Chhamb abandoned by the Indian forces, (General) Musa flew to 7 Division HQ under the command of Major General Yahya Khan and asked (Major General Akhtar Hussain) Malik to meet him there. At 1300 hours on 2 September, in the presence of Malik, Musa asked Yahya to take command of Grand Slam with immediate effect. Even more dramatically, Malik was flown back to Rawalpindi and then sent to Murree, the HQ of 12 Infantry Division. The change in command was confirmed in a flash message from GHQ: "7 Division assume control of Operation Grand Slam with immediate effect... further orders to be issued in accordance with plans discussed by Commander-in-Chief (Musa) with commander of 7 Division (Yahya)".'

The decision was inexplicable. Why was Malik removed? Was it because he had failed to take Akhnoor on the first day of the offensive? Or was there something more to the decision than just professional differences? The question has never been satisfactorily answered, although Bajwa and other Pakistani writers have attempted to shed some light on the possible motives behind what, in retrospect, looks like professional hara-kiri.

Major General Akhtar Malik never wrote any account of the 1965 war, unlike

many other players from that period who penned their memoirs. Bajwa has quoted a letter Malik wrote to his brother two years after the war which gives a glimpse into what Malik felt about his removal. Malik says, 'At no point was I assigned any reason for being removed from command by Ayub, Musa or Yahya. They were all sheepish at best. I think the reasons will be given only when I am no more... I reasoned and then pleaded with Yahya that if it was credit he was looking for, he should take the overall command but let me go up to Akhnoor as his subordinate, but he refused.'

Whatever the reason, the Pakistani advance lost the momentum on 2 September, giving the Indians time and space to beef up their defences. Thapliyal and Prasad write: 'Perhaps the change in command and the delay in advance were related to the stubborn resistance put up by the Indian defenders...'

A Pakistani Armoured Corps officer, Major Agha Humayun Amin, is scathing in his criticism about the failure of the Pakistani Army to push onto Akhnoor on 2 September 1965. In his book *1965 India Pakistan War in Brief*, Amin writes: 'For the information of self-styled civilian military experts in Pakistan who keep on passing judgement that Akhtar Hussain Malik could not have taken Akhnoor, there were no fresh troops except the extremely battered 191 Brigade in-between Chhamb and Akhnoor, while the only squadron of armour in Chhamb had also been severely mauled having only three tanks left. In short, just three tanks and one extremely weak brigade stood in-between approximately 75 Pakistani tanks and three infantry brigades, out of which two had relatively slight losses while one brigade was absolutely fresh... At this crucial stage, instead of seizing the golden but fleeting operational opportunity by the forelock, the Pakistani GHQ changed the command of the operation and ordered Headquarter 7 Division to take over operations. Thus nothing happened on 2 September.'

Bajwa has listed three possible reasons for Akhtar's removal mid-stream: 'One possible explanation is that Yahya was a close friend of Ayub's and known to be on unfriendly terms with Malik. With the capture of Akhnoor apparently imminent, either Yahya had lobbied to be given command of Grand Slam and capture the prize of Akhnoor, or Ayub had decided to help an old friend take the glory.

'Secondly, and highly controversially, it has been claimed by some that as General Akhtar Malik belonged to the Ahmadiya sect (which was declared by the Pakistani government under Bhutto to be non-Muslim), he was not permitted to become a war hero with the capture of Akhnoor. Although in Pakistan this is widely believed to be the reason, it seems unlikely to have been a large factor in Ayub's mind...

'The third and most likely explanation appears to be that Ayub's doubts and hesitations about the whole operation and the risks involved with Grand Slam had reared up again. Apart from Malik and Gul Hasan (Director Military Operations at

that time in the Pakistani army), there seems to have been few senior army officers in the Pakistani army keen on the idea of an all-out war with India and Musa was known to be sceptical about the chances of Gibraltar and Grand Slam achieving their objectives. Ayub had hesitated even before the launch of Grand Slam, and news that it was moving towards Akhnur meant that Ayub now decided to follow the advice of Musa rather than Malik and limit the offensive so as to avoid all-out war with India...'

Ayub's fond hope of avoiding an all-out war was, however, misplaced since his forces were at the doorstep of Akhnur, which India had to save at any cost. Pakistan's inexplicable 'go-slow' helped of course. Evidence that Ayub wanted to remove Malik from command came in the form of actions taken by Yahya on 2 September. Instead of pressing home the advantage, Yahya, in his first order for the Grand Slam forces, directed them to consolidate 'with a view to meet any enemy counter-attacks.' As Major Amin said earlier, and as we know from several Indian accounts including official history, the Indian Army was in total disarray and there was nothing to suggest that the Indian forces could have withstood a Pakistani offensive, leave alone counter-attacked them. General Harbakhsh notes: 'On 2 September 1965, the enemy probed forward with comparative caution.' An understatement, to say the least!

So overwhelming were the Pakistani force numbers in Chhamb– Jaurian on 1 and 2 September that its 102 Brigade crossed the river Tawi unopposed by 1930 hours on 2 September. But instead of pushing ahead to capture Jaurian, Yahya again ordered the troops to consolidate.

There is one possibility that has not been discussed or described in any of the accounts written by most Indian and Pakistani army officers. Was the late-evening airstrike by the Indian Air Force on 1 September so effective and devastating that it paralysed some of the Pakistani formations? It is quite possible.

The situation thereafter is aptly described by Brigadier Amjad Ali Khan Chaudhry. He writes: 'Pakistani plan was "advance (to Akhnur) to start immediately after reduction of Chhamb, that is, 1 September..." The battle of Chhamb was practically over by the afternoon... Although the advance to Akhnur had been delayed because the first phase of the operation had not been completed on time, as envisaged by Major General Akhtar Malik, it was still not too late to make a dash for Akhnur and prevent the enemy from regaining balance and offering organised resistance further back. Accordingly, Malik gave orders for the advance to commence in the early hours of the next morning. But for some sudden developments, which arrested the speed and momentum of the operation, it would have been still possible to capture Akhnur within the next twenty-four hours.'

Major General Akhtar Malik had given orders on the afternoon of 1 September for advancing towards Akhnur, but that had to be postponed to first light the next

day, undoubtedly because of the havoc caused by the attacking Vampire and Mystere squadrons. Brigadier Azmat Hayat, commander, 10 Brigade, was to lead the advance on the main Chhamb–Akhnoor axis. It was sometime after that that the IAF strikes went in. By the time night was settling in, Hayat’s brigade found itself paralysed after the strike by the IAF. His explanation of not getting the codeword failed to convince anyone since the Corps Artillery was moving forward. There was no advance at first light the next morning, and Brigadier Chaudhry was ‘bitterly disappointed and completely at a loss to understand why we were not moving on and what was happening at HQ 25 Brigade.’

Brigadier Chaudhry later learnt that the army C-in-C (General Musa) had finally ordered the change (including change of command from Akhtar to Yahya Khan) around midday on 2 September, since ‘he was told that the advance could not proceed because command and control had broken down and the guns had not moved forward to support the advance.’ But Chaudhry is categorical that the guns had moved forward. Either way, it indicated a breakdown of command and control in the normal sense, except possibly for 10 Brigade, which had borne the brunt of the IAF attack.

The question is: what were these ‘sudden developments’? It had to be one single factor that the Pakistani planners failed to take into account: the IAF coming into play. Air Force officers point out that Pakistan had made the same mistake in 1947–48 in Kashmir (and was to repeat it in Kargil in 1999). The unexpected massive airstrikes by Mystères and Vampires perhaps struck the confidence of the Pakistanis. The airstrikes not only killed the Pakistani momentum effectively but also prevented the fall of Akhnoor, which was the lifeline of the Indian Army in relation to the defence of Jammu and Kashmir.

Even the Pakistani Army chief, General Musa, recognised that ‘taking Akhnoor had become a difficult proposition after India used its air force in the Chhamb–Jaurian sector.’ Was it then the loss of confidence that dictated Yahya Khan’s decisions on 2 and 3 September?

Whatever the cause, the delay helped India’s freshly inducted 41 Mountain Brigade to strengthen its defensive posture. By 3 September, 41 Mountain Brigade reported that the intermediate position at Jaurian was reasonably well-prepared to oppose the enemy. The armour support to this position was provided by 20 Lancers, which had been rushed in from Pathankot, and the embattled C Squadron, which had fought singlehandedly so far at Chhamb. The 161 Field Regiment and a battery of Medium Regiment provided the artillery support.

Sure enough, around 1900 hours that day, Pakistan mounted a massive offensive on Jaurian with 30 tanks, supported by infantry and artillery. It was clear that 41 Mountain Brigade, despite its confidence, would not be able to withstand the attack for more than 24 hours. The situation looked as critical as on 1 September,

when Chhamb fell. So the brass decided to rush in 28 Infantry Brigade, which was kept as reserve corps, to arrest the decline in the army's fortunes. This brigade was tasked with holding a delaying position along the general line of Fatwal Ridge, about six miles west of Akhnoor.

The next day, the Pakistanis renewed their attack and in a three-hour battle, three forward company locations of 41 Mountain Brigade were overrun, only to be reclaimed through fierce fighting. Meanwhile, it came to light that on the night of 3 September the 161 Field Regiment had abandoned its guns in the wake of the massive Pakistani attack. General Harbakhsh, who had coincidentally flown down to Akhnoor on 4 September, taking along with him the 15 Corps Commander Lieutenant General KC Katoch, was shocked to hear of the loss of guns. 'I was appalled by the regiment's shocking conduct. Apart from losing valuable fire-support potential, it was a disgrace no regiment or formation could ever live down. In the presence of the corps commander, I issued stern orders making it obligatory for the formation to retrieve the guns at all cost. It appeared that neither the regiment nor the formation appreciated the gravity of the slur of losing field guns to the enemy, for only half-hearted attempts were made to recover these, and without success. The loss of these artillery pieces remains a blemish on the fair name of 161 Field Regiment as well as 10 Infantry Division,' he writes.

The failure of 161 Field Regiment to retrieve its guns led to a court of inquiry. The enquiry resulted in the sacking of Major General Chopra from the command of 10 Division.

The Chhamb situation worried everyone—UN Secretary General U Thant made frantic appeals for a ceasefire, but Pakistan was not interested. In fact, it was perhaps emboldened by Chinese Foreign Minister Marshal Chen Yi's presence in Karachi and his open support to Pakistan. After six hours of talks with Bhutto, he issued a statement supporting the 'just action taken by Pakistan to repel the Indian armed provocation.'

In Delhi, the ECC met twice on 4 September, at 1 pm and 4.45 pm. The worry remained. Chavan's diary entry for 4 September conveys a mix of emotions. It reads:

- There were two airstrikes. The afternoon one produced results. Two Pak aircraft shot down.
- In Chhamb fighting, things are not going well. I think somebody has initially blundered. Jaurian will have to be given up today. Real fight near Akhnoor bridge will have to be resolutely fought, otherwise it is going to be disaster for the army and the government. All efforts will have to be made to avert it. I propose to concentrate tomorrow on this.

In view of the mounting pressure, 41 Mountain Brigade withdrew on the night of 4–5 September from Jaurian to Akhnoor, passing through the Fatwal Ridge po-

sition that was being held by 28 Infantry Brigade. Things were indeed grim in Chhamb. Pakistani troops were following the withdrawing Indians and leaned on Indian defences on both Jaurian and Kalit axes. General Musa sent a signal to Pakistani forces, exhorting them thus: 'You have got your teeth in him (the enemy). Bite deeper and deeper till he is destroyed.'

The Chhamb crisis was rapidly assuming a disastrous proportion, leaving India with no option but to operationalise a plan that was prepared in April that year after the Rann of Kutch incident.

Code-named Operation Riddle, Army HQ had planned to target Pakistan's most important city – Lahore. But there was a formidable obstacle, the Ichhogil Canal, to overcome. The canal, a few kilometres inside the territory in Lahore sector, linked the Ravi with Sutlej, parallel to the India–Pakistan border. Until 1965, India's operational strategy had been defensive and reactive, so the deployment along the border was in defensive mode. Although Pakistan had also taken a defensive position east of the Ichhogil Canal, the Indians had assessed that the Pakistani Army would not fight a major defensive battle east of the canal.

In a change of mindset and strategy after the Kutch incident, army HQ had given final touches to Operation Riddle, which was planned as an offensive action. The prediction was that the mere presence of Indian troops on the canal opposite Lahore would draw Pakistani forces from Sialkot and other areas, and thus reduce its offensive capability in other sectors. Moreover, if India could establish a bridge-head over the canal, the Pakistani Army would be forced to fight there and that would lead to attrition of her smaller army.

Operation Riddle was planned to meet an eventuality like the one India was facing in Chhamb–Jaurian on 4 September, and this was the 'next move', as Chavan noted in his diary on 4 September. The bold plan originally envisaged that I and XI Corps would launch simultaneous surprise attacks in Sialkot and Lahore sectors. But I Corps was still concentrating in its forward area and was far from ready for the attack. So, looking at the urgency in Chhamb, Chavan gave the go-ahead to the COAS to launch XI Corps across the international border on the night of 5 September.

As if on cue, Pakistan gave India enough reasons to widen the front. On 5 September, a single Pakistani F-86 Sabre jet attacked an anti-aircraft position near Amritsar and inflicted severe damage. India construed this as the opening of a new front. Thus, on the night of 5 September, Operation Riddle was launched. In the 1965 war, this was to prove a turning point like no other. Even as the Operation in Punjab progressed, in the Chhamb sector Indian forces started planning a counter-offensive and tried to consolidate in the area although the situation did not change much.

Catching Pakistan by Surprise

Threatening Lahore

Threatened with the loss of Akhnoor and following Pakistan's dash through Chhamb and Jaurian, the Indian politico-military leadership was left with no alternative but to put into action a secret plan they had finalised in the aftermath of the Kutch episode in March–April 1965.

Named Operation Riddle, the plan was to counter any threatening move by Pakistan in Jammu and Kashmir. A war game called Operation Ablaze was conducted in May–June 1965 in which Indian forces had discussed threadbare the plan to launch an offensive across the international border in Lahore and Sialkot sectors.

The main aim was to threaten Lahore, in many ways Pakistan's pre-eminent city, drive a wedge between the Pakistani forces deployed in the Lahore and Sialkot sectors, and destroy their war potential. The offensive was to serve the dual purpose of ensuring the security of Punjab, by advancing the Indian defence line into Pakistani territory and gaining control of some Pakistani areas, so as to use the situation as a bargain chip in any eventual negotiation that would take place.

As the situation turned precarious on 3 September in the Chhamb–Jaurian sector, Army HQ in consultation with the Western Command decided to put into action the plan prepared on 9 August.

The Indian plan visualised a limited offensive intended to cover the area from Dera Baba Nanak in the north to the Sutlej in the south. It is important to understand the lay of the land and the terrain in this area before we proceed further.

The border in this area meandered from north to south across flat, fertile plain, thickly populated and well-served by roads, railways and canals. The Indo–Pakistan border was about 28 km from Amritsar with many roads connected to it. One of these roads running through Ramitirth and Kohali connected Amritsar with Ranian (in Pakistan). Another road running to the north-east by way of Ajnala led to Dera Baba Nanak on Ravi River. The Grand Trunk (GT) Road on which Lahore was situated was 24 km from the border.

Khem Karan, the Indian border town, was situated about 60 km south-west of Amritsar on the road that passed to Bhikhiwind. Cutting this road diagonally at Bhikhiwind, another highway ran from Harike on the Sutlej to Lahore by way of Khalra and Barki (in Pakistan). Harike was connected to Amritsar by a road that passed through Tarn Taran. This road went up to the Indo–Pakistan border. Another road between the border and Khem Karan passed through Patti and Valtoha. One more road running due east from Tarn Taran went up to the Indo–Pakistan border near Rajatal. A railway line linked Amritsar to Lahore. Dera Baba Nanak and Khem Karan were also linked by rail to Amritsar.

There were two strategic bridges on the river Beas, flowing 43 km east of Amritsar: one near a town named Beas and the other at Harike. The Hudiara drain ran from the north-east of Amritsar to the south-west, cut the GT Road 9 km east of the Indo–Pak border, and then entered Pakistan to the south of Rajatal. Hudiara village lay in Pakistan on the Bhikhiwind–Lahore road.

As a strong defensive measure, Pakistan had constructed a multipurpose waterway, the Bambanwala–Ravi–Bedian or BRB Link Canal, which was popularly known as Ichhogil Canal. Flowing from north to south, between 5 km and 14 km from the border, it carried Marala–Ravi Link Canal water to Sutlej. It crossed the GT Road near a village called Dograi. Interestingly, the west bank of the canal was raised higher than its east bank.

It was in this terrain that the Indian forces under XI Corps were to operate once the decision to cross the international border came through.

The task of carrying out the surprise attack fell upon XI Corps, headquartered at Jalandhar and commanded by Lieutenant General JS Dhillon. In August 1965, the XI Corps was assigned three primary tasks:

- (a) To destroy enemy forces that might enter Punjab and Ganganagar sector in Rajasthan.
- (b) To advance to Ichhogil Canal along the axes GT Road, Bhikhiwind–Khalra and Bhikhiwind–Khem Karan to secure Pakistani territory from opposite Ranian and to eliminate the Pakistani bridgehead at Dera Baba Nanak, and if possible, capture the bridge on the Ravi.
- (c) To be prepared to advance on Lahore, on completion of the second task.

The XI Corps was allotted the following formations for the task ahead:

- *4 Mountain Division* comprised two brigades, instead of the normal three that make up a division. To make matters more complicated, the two brigades were equipped for mountain warfare and did not have adequate resources to fight in the plains and against the armoured strength of the adversary. The division was given one armoured regiment and one under-strength artillery regiment in support.
- *7 Infantry Division* comprised two infantry brigades, one armoured regiment, and one battery of medium artillery.
- *15 Infantry Division* was given two infantry brigades, one under-strength armoured regiment, one heavy-guns artillery regiment, and one battery of medium artillery.

Additionally, there was the 2 Independent Armoured Brigade, one field artillery regiment, three more infantry brigades – 29, 67 and 96 – and one motorised battalion.

According to the plan, all these units were to move straight into battle, unlike

the normal practice of ‘forming up’ (moving to a forward assembly area from the concentration area). The troops were told to move straight across the international border directly from the peacetime locations to achieve surprise. General Harbakhsh has recorded the reason for doing so. He writes: ‘Based on an analytical examination of Pak’s reactions to our concentration opposite the Lahore sector during Op Ablaze (May– July 1965), it was appreciated that to forestall Pak’s opposition in force, our offensive in Lahore front must be launched within a period of 48 hours from the time orders were given by army headquarters. The period was to include the move forward of troops from their permanent or interim locations and the actual launching of the operation.’

The plan was to launch simultaneous offensives by XI Corps across Lahore and by I Corps opposite Sialkot. However, the structure and the distinct expertise of the latter was a problem.

While XI Corps was comparatively well-organised and its units were located close to border, I Corps was still a force in the making. Headquartered in Jhansi, its troops were stationed in far-flung areas and many of the units were being outfitted for mountain warfare (that is, equipped for combat at higher altitudes), the requirements of which are different from those in the plains. The 6 Mountain Division under the command of I Corps just moved from Bareilly to Ambala on 19 August and had still not settled in. As the nomenclature suggests, this division was a specialised formation meant for mountain warfare and was indeed deployed—since its raising in 1963—along the China border in Uttar Pradesh. It hardly had any experience or equipment to fight in the plains.

The 14 Infantry Division was not fully raised and was still stuck at Sagar, deep inside Madhya Pradesh, while the 1st Armoured Division was at its temporary location in the Jalandhar–Kapurthala area. In any case, I Corps was perhaps the newest formation of the Indian Army at that time, having been raised as late as May 1965 under the expansion plan that was being implemented in the aftermath of the 1962 debacle. Only 26 Division, located in the Jammu–Samba area, and 1st Armoured Division were well-poised and ready to join any offensive plan.

As the pressure in Chhamb–Jaurian mounted, it became imperative to launch a riposte across the international border. However, the original plan to launch I and XI Corps simultaneously had to be modified because of the reasons cited above. According to the original plan, I Corps units located in Central India were supposed to get 10 days to move into their operational areas, but the situation was desperate. The timelines were compressed thanks to a well-coordinated approach involving the army, the Indian Railways, and the civilian arm of the government. ‘Excellent staff work combined with a very cooperative railway service succeeded in slashing the original concentration time from 10 to four days,’ General Harbakhsh recounts.

Yet, so hasty was the assembly of troops in the concentration area that the GOC of I Corps, Lieutenant General PO Dunn, felt that they would not be ready by the night of 5–6 September. ‘We would have started the offensive in a dishevelled state. I, therefore, accepted the recommendation of the general officer commanding, I Corps, to postpone the offensive to the night of 7–8 September,’ General Harbakhsh narrates.

Once it was clear that the I Corps offensive would be delayed, army HQ and Western Command decided to fully concentrate on planning the XI Corps attack. On 3 September, Vice Chief of Army Staff Lieutenant General PP Kumaramangalam flew down to Chandigarh. General Harbakhsh and his brigadier general staff (BGS) travelled from Shimla. The Western Army commander pressed for permission to launch the offensive across the international border. The vice chief, of course, had no authority to do so, but promised to pursue the matter in Delhi.

That night, General Chaudhuri rang up General Harbakhsh in Shimla—he had visited XI Corps HQ in Jalandhar that morning and told the commanders to be ready to launch at the shortest notice—and told him to launch the attack. The D-day given to Western Command was 7 September. However, as Jaurian looked in imminent danger of falling on 4 September, Delhi decided to advance the offensive by XI Corps by 24 hours; that is, it would now begin at 4 am on 6 September.

Twelve hours after army HQ conveyed that Western Command should be ready to launch the offensive, the latter ordered the move forward with a condition that no vehicle columns were to cross the Beas before last light on 5 September. That gave the formations less than 12 hours to assemble in their forward concentration areas at 0400 hours on 6 September.

In Delhi, Defence Minister YB Chavan had an eventful day on 5 September. It was also President Dr Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan’s birthday. Chavan went to Rashtrapati Bhavan to wish the president. He does not record whether the president was briefed about India’s decision to cross the international boundary. What he does note in the diary is this: ‘Spent the morning in the office. Had detailed discussions with COAS and CAS about tonight’s plan.’ According to Chavan’s diary, the Chief of Army Staff came to meet him at 9 pm that day. ‘He (General Chaudhuri) was relaxed. Had a brief discussion. I wished him good luck,’ Chavan records.

Meanwhile, in Punjab the Western Army was on the move.

Throughout 4 and 5 September, thousands of vehicles—civil and military—and hundreds of trains rushed towards their destinations as per the movement plan. It is remarkable that no serious accident was recorded during this hectic movement. To avoid alerting the adversary, the planned move of Western Command HQ from Shimla to Ambala was delayed till the last moment possible. General Harbakhsh and his top staff officers even attended a large civilian lunch party at Shimla on 5 September. He took off in a helicopter to Jalandhar only at 1500 hours.

From there, General Harbakhsh and Corps Commander Lieutenant General JS Dhillon travelled to Amritsar to meet and motivate the troops about to get into action. At midnight, the Western Army Commander informed the civilian officers in the district about the impending offensive. 'The civil officials were asked to assist in control of refugees and to make arrangements for attending to civilian casualties in the wake of the advancing troops. The information about the offensive was to be broadcast in the city of Amritsar on loudspeakers, with instructions that nobody was to leave the town. All civilian traffic out of Amritsar was banned until further orders,' General Harbakhsh writes.

Despite the planning at the highest level, at least one junior officer's account (*The Battle of Dograi & Batapore* by Brigadier Desmond E Hayde, MVC) says the fighting units were not in the picture till the very last moment: 'As on 30 August 1965, the infiltrators situation in J&K notwithstanding—grim as it was— and fighting breaking out all around, there was no talk of war on the Lahore Front... On 2 September, a warning order was issued: WAR! Pakistan Army units had entered undisputed Indian territory in Chhamb–Jaurian sector: Prepare to advance towards Lahore: No orders yet below CO level: No recall of leave parties and other absentees... 4 September—more orders: The advance will commence on 5 September: All ranks may now be informed in utmost secrecy: still no recall of absentees...the suddenness of impending war brought the CO 3 Jat hard up against the fact that his unit was quite untrained to fight tanks. Anti-tank gunners who had last fired the recoilless gun as far back as 1961 were but a few and the guns themselves had just recently been reissued...' Lt Col Hayde was the then CO of 3 Jat.

These uncertainties notwithstanding, by midnight of 5–6 September the Indian troops were primed for the attack in the Lahore sector (see [map 8](#)).

The Offensive Begins

'On the afternoon of 5 September, Pakistani aircraft intruded across the international boundary at Wagah near Amritsar and fired rockets at an air force unit. Anti-aircraft action drove them away. This violation was reported but there were further violations over the same border by the Pakistan Air Force, and it was quite apparent that Pakistan's next move was to attack Punjab across the international border. The indication that this was going to happen was building up over some time. In order to forestall the openings of another front by Pakistan, our troops in Punjab moved across the border in Lahore sector for the protection of the Indian border.

'We have taken the decision to effectively repel Pakistani aggression in the full knowledge that the whole nation, irrespective of the party alignments, is one with the government in this matter. The prime minister has received the fullest assurance from all quarters in this regard. I am sure honourable members and the country will show appreciation of the great gallantry with which our army has been fighting against odds in our state of Jammu and Kashmir in extremely difficult ter-

rain as in the Kargil and Haji Pir areas. The House is undoubtedly also proud of the performance of our boys in the Air Force who have destroyed several Pakistani Sabre jets. I have no doubt now that our armed forces will give a worthy account of themselves.'

With this speech in the Lok Sabha on 6 September, Defence Minister YB Chavan confirmed to the world that India had crossed the international border in the Lahore sector. With that began the most decisive phase of the all-out war.

At 0400 hours on 6 September, the 54 Infantry Brigade (part of 15 Infantry Division commanded by Major General Niranjan Prasad) under Brigadier MS Rikhand of 1 Jat, allotted from 38 Infantry Brigade, crossed the international boundary on the GT Road axis and on the Ichhogil–Uttar axis, respectively. The 3 Jat unit, part of 54 Infantry Brigade, vigorously attacked the objective astride Mile 14 on the Amritsar–Lahore road and managed to capture it by 0630 hours, less than two hours after the launch of Operation Riddle. In the next half hour, the village of Gosal-Dial was cleared too. In this attack, 3 Jat killed 35 Pakistanis and captured two officers and 12 soldiers, besides seizing a considerable quantity of weapons that included two RCL guns, three mounted jeeps, three trucks, and 45 other weapons.

The forward positions were lightly held by Pakistan, since they had not really anticipated a full-fledged Indian attack in this sector. The opposition that the Jats encountered at Gosal–Dial consisted of part of a Baluch company and some mobile recce and support elements.

These skirmishes were not without some anxious moments for Colonel Hayde, who was in the thick of the fighting. The CO's party was the first to approach Dial, while the companies were still clearing Gosal a few hundred metres behind.

Suddenly, they came across a lorry carrying a Pakistani lieutenant (an artillery observation officer) and his party, rushing back from the Wagah border outpost, which had been attacked by another battalion. Both parties were equally surprised at seeing the other; the lieutenant reacted first, firing at Colonel Hayde. The shots missed, and the colonel fired back, making the Pakistani drop his pistol. Before the other occupants of the lorry could regain their composure, Colonel Hayde had already taken the detachment including the officer as prisoners of war.

Colonel Hayde had other worries. For one, he was not in wireless communication with the brigade headquarters. However, the Brigade Commander, Brigadier MS Rikh, soon arrived to personally take stock of the progress of operations. While the Jats had captured their objectives with minimum casualties and were in high spirits, the neighbouring battalion had faced several reverses and the commanding officer expressed his inability to proceed towards the main task: the capture of Dograi. When Brigadier Rikh asked the CO of 3 Jat if he would take up the task of capturing Dograi, he immediately agreed (see [map 9](#)).

However, before the battalion could prepare for the next attack, an unfortunate incident occurred. By this time the battalion's vehicles, comprising of RCL jeeps, mortars and replenishment of ammunition, had arrived in the forward location. This was in keeping with the normal practice wherein replenishment vehicles carrying ammunition and replacement weapons arrived at forward locations during a pause in the fighting. Thus, the 3 Jat replenishment vehicles and heavy weapons, termed 'F' (fighting), had moved from their battalion's HQ base at Khasa (near Amritsar) along the GT Road in broad daylight. Normally, they would have dispersed and camouflaged on arrival at the battalion location, but before they could do so, six F-86 aircraft of Pakistan Air Force, which had perhaps been tracking their movement for some time, started strafing them. The Jats lost most of their RCL guns and mortars along with a number of men in this unfortunate incident. The artillery forward observation officer (FOO) accompanying 3 Jat was also killed. The battalion was now left without all its heavy weapons and its FOO, who could have helped bring down artillery fire when needed as the Jats progressed deeper into enemy territory.

Undeterred, Colonel Hayde did not let the morale of the unit drop, and began planning for their next objective – the village of Dograi. Colonel Hayde had, from experience, realised that morning that the key to success lay in a swift operation to capture Dograi and establish a foothold on Ichhogil Canal before the enemy had a chance to regain his balance. He, therefore, led the Jats in a bold daylight advance towards the objective. Three tanks of the troop of 14 Horse allotted to them for this operation, moving ahead of the column, were the only means of heavy fire with them.

As they neared Dograi village (as marked in the maps available with India), Colonel Hayde's company realised that Dograi was now a large town with considerable population. As the Jats attacked the town, Pakistanis guarding the area put up a brief resistance before starting to withdraw across the Ichhogil Canal over a partially damaged bridge. By 1130 hours, 3 Jat had secured its objective, Dograi, and established itself on the eastern bank of Ichhogil.

As Colonel Hayde took stock of the situation from close by the damaged bridge, he was surprised to see the largish built-up area across the canal not marked on their maps. They later found out that the township was called Batapore because of a Bata shoe factory that had come up there. The Indians had absolutely no idea that this township had been established in the previous few years.



The blown up bridge at Ichhogil Canal

Colonel Hayde ordered two companies to cross the partially destroyed bridge and occupy the built-up areas of Batapore and Attok Awan adjacent to it. Thus, eight hours after crossing the international boundary, Indian troops were across the most formidable Pakistani obstacle, the Ichhogil Canal.

They were well within striking distance of Lahore, but the triumph was to be short-lived. It must be noted here that the aim given out by the army HQ and Western Command was to *threaten* Lahore and not capture or occupy it. The explanation was simple. A threat to Lahore would force the Pakistani army to withdraw some of its rampaging forces from the Chhamb–Jaurian sector and divert them towards protecting its premier city. That's exactly what happened.

The moment the news about the Indian advance across Ichhogil was received, the pressure in Chhamb eased. On the other hand, any attempt to occupy Lahore would have sucked in a large body of Indian troops in built-up, populated areas, something that India had no intention getting trapped in. The army chief had explained to the defence minister that trying to capture and hold cities consumed too much manpower, as demonstrated by the examples of Stalingrad and Berlin during World War II.

Unfortunately, the rapid pace of operations by the Jats could not be pressed into a lasting advantage since its speed had far outstripped the capability of commanders up the chain to match their pace. Otherwise, the next logical step would have been for the brigade and the division to maintain this success by rushing in reinforcements and holding onto the territorial gains. However, the battalion had no

rearward communications; the brigade headquarters was not even aware of the spectacular developments on the frontline. 3 Jat was on the far side of a formidable enemy obstacle, without its heavy support weapons, without its artillery FOO, without communications, and with no reinforcements in sight. The brave Jats stood firm against enemy artillery shelling and small-arms fire. But when they saw the Pakistanis preparing to counter attack in strength, with tanks for support, Colonel Hayde ordered them to fall back to Dograi on the Indian side of the canal. Shortly thereafter, Lieutenant Brijendra Singh, the tank troop leader from 14 Horse, informed Colonel Hayde that his CO had ordered him to fall back to Gosal-Dial.

Major Jha says: ‘The display of exceptional group cohesion and camaraderie by 3 Jat under the decisive leadership of our intrepid CO carried the day and posed a serious threat to the city of Lahore. Most national newspapers, including the Western media, carried this victory news next day in their headlines. However, due to fluctuations of war and aberrations in decision-making at our higher headquarters, 3 Jat had to reluctantly withdraw that afternoon from its captured bridgehead on the canal to the nearby Pakistani village of Santpura to the east...’

For his exceptional and daring leadership qualities, Colonel Desmond Hayde was awarded the Maha Vir Chakra (MVC). Yet, Colonel Hayde, an Anglo-Indian of Irish descent, was to do more in the next phase of the war, which had just been launched.

A Grand Tank Battle

As 3 Jat reluctantly fell back to Dograi, it became evident that even other troops were facing the lack of backup after the initial advance. For instance, 15 Dogra also crossed the border at 0400 hours to clear the Rangers post and the bridge. It attacked a Pakistani company at the Upper Bari Doab Canal (UBDC) bridge and even occupied it. The battalion also took 20 Pakistanis including one officer prisoner, losing one officer and 13 soldiers in the process. According to the original plan, 15 Dogra, supported by the tanks of the C Squadron of 14 Horse, was to press on further up to the GT Road bridge over the main axis, but the brigade commander, perhaps wrongly assessing the number of casualties that the battalion suffered, asked it to firm up at Dial and told 3 Jat to proceed further.

Similarly, despite being just 550 metres short of the Wagah railway bridge, 13 Punjab had to withdraw to the Wagah railway station in the face of intense firing and fierce resistance by the well-dug-in Pakistanis. In the north, intense Pakistani shelling and strafing by the PAF had forced 1 Jat to withdraw to the Ranianbund since reinforcements could not be sent further up.

The lack of follow-up and planning for contingencies was showing up within the higher echelons. General Harbakhsh describes this aspect: ‘It is admitted that enemy air action had strafed the administrative convoy of both 15 Dogra and 3 Jat that morning and some vehicles were destroyed. But such setbacks, inevitable in

battle, should have been foreseen and alternate arrangements made to overcome them. To my mind, there is only one explanation for this administrative failure: lack of foresight and absence of determined leadership to see things through, come what may. The opportunity, however, went begging—a brilliant success was allowed to slip away unexploited.’

Because of certain differences in the senior leadership, precious time was lost and by 1300 hours on 6 September, Major General Prasad told the corps commander that the situation in his sector was desperate due to heavy casualties, and that no further advance was possible. General Harbakhsh was not convinced that the situation was as bad as was being described. He narrates: ‘I was convinced that the actual state of affairs could not be as gloomy as Major General Niranjan Prasad would have us believe, for with the exception of the enemy air action, Pak as yet had not reacted at all across the Ichhogil Canal.’

Accompanied by the Corps Commander Lieutenant General Dhillon, General Harbakhsh rushed to Attari, where Major General Prasad was located. A quick review on the spot convinced both General Harbakhsh and Lieutenant General Dhillon that the fighting potential of the formation had in no way been impaired, and that ‘only the general officer commanding (Major General Prasad) had failed to measure up to certain local reverses inevitable in any battle.’

Major General Niranjan Prasad was told to secure the bridge over Ichhogil Canal by first light on 7 September. The 38 Brigade commander was given the task of securing the east bank of the Ichhogil between Bhasin and GT Road axis the same afternoon.

Meanwhile, elsewhere too, the Indian troops were facing setbacks after initial success. For instance, at 1530 hours on 6 September, the 6 Kumaon battalion (part of the 96 Brigade designated as reserve corps) was told to recapture the Ichhogil bridge after 1 Jat had failed to secure it that morning. The deadline was first light on 7 September. Moving from Jandiala, the battalion concentrated behind the Rani-anbund late that night. At first light on 7 September, despite heavy shelling by the Pakistanis, 6 Kumaon managed to capture the bridge, only to abandon it in the face of heavy armour fire and frequent counter-attacks. On 7 September, it withdrew to Ranian. Another attempt was made to capture the Ichhogil bridge on the night of 7–8 September, this time jointly by 1 Jat and 6 Kumaon, but the Pakistanis were resolute in defence and aggressive in their counter-attacks. Failing to secure the bridge, the two battalions fell back to Ranian by noon on 8 September.

With Phase I of 15 Division (launched by 54 Brigade) incomplete, the corps commander had to order Major General Prasad with the go-ahead for 38 Brigade to move on ‘man pack’ basis (where every soldier is self-sufficient in terms of food and water for a designated period of time, instead of depending on support from the rear) via Wagah–Singhpura. However, they could not make much progress and

was stonewalled at Sadhanwali, well short of the canal.

General Harbakhsh notes: 'By the morning of 7 September, it became clear that Major General Niranjan Prasad had lost complete grip over his command and that he had made no serious effort to retrieve the situation.'

Already under pressure, Major General Prasad panicked when the communication link to the brigade got disrupted and, in his anxiety to locate the brigade HQ, moved towards the frontline with a small protection detail. The party got ambushed by the Pakistanis, who captured 12 men and four vehicles. The GOC escaped by the skin of his teeth but left behind his memo pad and a file containing a formal complaint against his removal from command of the same division in North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA) in the 1962 war against China.

The Pakistanis fully exploited the file for propaganda on radio against the Indian Army. It was a matter of time before Major General Prasad was removed from command for his dismal performance in a crunch situation. He was replaced by Major General Mohinder Singh on the same night to command 15 Division.

Even as India was trying to get a grip on the situation, the Pakistanis had regrouped after the initial stunning advance by 3 Jat. It reacted viciously and rushed across a powerful combat group of armoured and infantry battalions with effective cover from artillery.

On 8 September, two units – 13 Punjab and 15 Dogra – under 54 Infantry Brigade could not take the intense pressure applied by the counter-attacking Pakistanis and broke the line, abandoning their defences. The higher leadership took control of the disintegrating units and put them back in defensive positions. However, both Lieutenant General Dhillon and General Harbakhsh realised that 54 Brigade could not be relied upon to provide the required security to the vital city of Amritsar, and so 96 Brigade (with two battalions, instead of the normal composition of three), initially kept as the reserve corps, was deployed just behind them along the Hudiara drain.

More bad news was to follow. On 10 September, elements of 1 Jat and 6 Kumaon located in Ranian area also fell apart in the Pakistani counter-attack, in the first 24 hours after the offensive began, exposing the right flank of the 15 Division and opening another approach for the adversary to Amritsar. As a result, XI Corps HQ had to take an emergency measure by withdrawing 96 Brigade from Hudiara 'Drain' and redeploying it to secure the exposed gap at Ranian. India's only Parachute Brigade, 50th, had meanwhile been made available to Western Command. Promptly it took up position at the Hudiara drain on 10 September.

Elsewhere, under the 7 Infantry Division, leading elements of 48 Infantry Brigade commanded by Brigadier KJS Shahaney contacted Pakistani defences at Hudiara at about 0700 hours on 6 September. They came under heavy, long-range automatic fire from Pakistani positions at Hudiara, Nurpur and Hudiaradrain. By

this time, 17 Rajput under the command of Lieutenant Colonel AS Gill had captured the Pakistani border post east of Bedian, achieving complete surprise. It was, however, halted about 550 metres east of Bedian village, when the defenders opened up with artillery, tanks and MMGs. The corps commander ordered the GOC, 7 Infantry Division, to mine the 17 Rajput area and prevent Pakistani ingress at Bedian at any cost.

The preparation for the attack on Hudiera continued despite heavy artillery and automatic fire. By 1030 hours, 6/8 Gorkha Rifles under the command of Lieutenant Colonel GA Nagle secured Hudiera village but could not attack Hudiera drain, in the face of accurate artillery and small-arms fire.

Meanwhile, 4 Sikh was tasked with capturing the village of Barki, a well-defended Pakistani bastion. The Pakistani side had deployed a company each at Barki village and Hudiera drain. The defences were cleverly camouflaged to resemble mud huts. Each pillbox had sufficient room to deploy a three-man team equipped with automatic weapons and was well-stocked for sustained operations. Extensive tunnelling in the village allowed free movement of personnel even during intense artillery shelling. Barki village also had adequate artillery defence. All in all, Barki was perhaps most suited for a defensive battle – it was a virtual fortress bristling with automatic weapons, armour and artillery.

By 6 September, GOC, 7 Infantry Division (see [map 10](#)), had ordered Brigadier Ferris, commander of 65 Brigade, to advance along the Barki–Ichhogil axis. While 4 Sikh was to capture the well-defended Barki village, 16 Punjab was to capture the east bank of Ichhogil and destroy Barki.

It took four more days for 4 Sikh to launch its assault on Barki. The attack began at 2000 hours on the night of 10 September. A pitched battle, fought by a well-entrenched adversary and a determined attacker, ensued. Both sides used tanks and artillery, besides the infantry's door-to-door tack. The Pakistanis, in fact, fired some 2,500 artillery rounds in less than an hour. The Sikhs pressed on regardless, taking out one pillbox after the other, silencing the guns by midnight. They were well supported by the Sherman tanks of the Central India Horse (CIH) regiment. In fact, the continuous firing by the Shermans that night convinced the Pakistanis that India had new tanks equipped with nightvision device. Fearing an all-out attack, the remaining Pakistanis abandoned the village. Later, during the lull in the fighting, the Pakistanis were allowed to take their dead away. Four trucks were deployed to transport the bodies back home.

A brave Pakistani major, RA Bhatti, was awarded Pakistan's highest gallantry award, Nishan-i-Haider (equivalent to India's Param Vir Chakra). Subedar Ajit Singh of 4 Sikh, who displayed great courage in carrying on with the attack despite being wounded in the chest during the night assault, was awarded the nation's second highest gallantry award, the Maha Vir Chakra, posthumously.

Describing the 7 Division's operation, General Harbakhsh writes: 'In a brilliant action executed with dash and determination, 7 Infantry Division had made a rapier-like thrust to fulfil the first phase of the mission. The performance of the formation was most creditable and compensated in large measure the reverses suffered by us in the rest of the corps zone.'

Now it was the turn of 16 Punjab (commanded by Lieutenant Colonel JS Bhullar) – supported by the division artillery, including 5 Field Regiment – to complete Phase II of the plan, which was to secure the east bank of Ichhogil Canal, and it did that with commendable ease late that night. Unfortunately, Commanding Officer of CIH Lieutenant Colonel SC Joshi was killed the same night while negotiating an enemy minefield.

Indeed, as the cat-and-mouse game continued, there were skirmishes all along the front. All the three divisions – 15, 7 and 4 – were gaining ground in some areas and losing positions in others. The Pakistanis, caught by surprise at Dograi and Batapore, had hit back with ferocity, making progress difficult for the Indian forces.

The developments of 6 September, which was the first day of the offensive, had initially lifted the spirits in Delhi. Defence Minister Chavan's entry for 6 September reads: 'A historic day, our troops marched in Lahore sector. IAF also did a good day's work. To begin with, we are not a war-minded nation and I am proud of it. Yet, there comes a moment in (a)nation's life when it has to stand up against a bully and teach him a good lesson. This is what we are out to do....'

The slip-ups in the next two days greatly upset the defence minister. He wrote on 9 September: 'Had a very bad day on all the fronts. Very fierce counter-attacks mounted and we are required to withdraw in Kasur area.... COAS (General JN Chaudhuri) was somewhat uncertain of himself. I suggested to him that he should go in forward areas so that he will be in touch with realities. He said he would go the next day.'

Chavan's reference to very fierce counter-attacks related to a great tank battle that was taking shape in the Khem Karan sector. In fact, the battle situation there was causing a great deal of anxiety in the top echelons of the Indian Army.

By the afternoon of 7 September, the situation in 4 Mountain Division sector had become desperate. Out of six battalions, nearly three had abandoned their defence line and the rest were under intense pressure from the enemy. The ones left intact were also thinly spread out. Only 4 Grenadiers and 1/9 Gorkha Rifles were seen to be in any state of fighting.

At this juncture, a quick visit by General Harbakhsh to the 4 Mountain Division and his discussion with GOC Major General Gurbaksh Singh on 8 September retrieved the situation, so much so that one of the most important battles of the 1965 war was won by units under this division on 9–10 September in the area of Khem

Karan and Asal Uttar.

General Harbakhsh remembers: ‘There comes a time in most campaigns when the fate of a battle hangs in the balance and vital issues are at stake. At such crucial junctures, unless the commander on the spot asserts himself to dominate the situation, all is lost. That critical stage in battle was then prevailing in the Khem Karan sector, and I felt that only the highest standard of leadership would save the day... the circumstances of battle were rather grim. I discussed the situation with general officer commanding, 4 Mountain Division, and tried to introduce an atmosphere of calm and confidence in what looked like a very chaotic and confused state of affairs. Fortunately, GOC Major General Gurbaksh Singh’s response was reassuring and self-confident. He took his leave with the promise of re-establishing his command and control over the situation. I came away with the feeling that thenceforth 4 Mountain Division would not budge from its position. My conviction was fully vindicated in the following two days: the formation evened scores with the enemy at Asal Uttar in a remarkable action, unsurpassed and hardly rivalled throughout the 22-day war with Pakistan.’

The action that General Harbakhsh speaks about are the famous battles at Khem Karan and Asal Uttar where the Pakistani Army’s pride, the 1st Armoured Division armed with the latest Patton tanks, was decimated.

On the intervening night of 8 and 9 September, a desperate Pakistan launched its spearhead, the 1st Armoured Division, into the war to break through Indian defences and threaten Amritsar after reaching the bridges on the Beas. The M-47 and M-48 Patton tanks were the most modern tanks of that period. They had good sighting systems and stabilised gun platforms that had a range of 2,000 metres. Equipped with infrared sights, they were capable of operating by night. The Indian armoured regiments, on the other hand, were mostly equipped with Sherman tanks. Their range was just 800 metres and they had no night sights.

Pakistan had a bold plan to reach the bridges at Harike and Beas (see [map 11](#)), which would give it multiple options of threatening Amritsar. It is also apparent that India’s Western Command was not certain of the location of 1st Armoured Division, which was positioned at Kasur, ready to spearhead the offensive into India’s critical bridges on the Beas.

The D-day for the operations was initially 7 September 1965. Inexplicably, Pakistan delayed the offensive by 24 hours. The delay helped the Indian troops to prepare defences and undertake flooding of the fields by breaching the Rohi Nala and the distributary canals to make the open area waterlogged. This automatically imposed restrictions on the movement of the Pakistani armour.

Meanwhile, on 8 September, as the Pakistani armour reached the vital bridges across the Beas river (one near Beas town and the other at Harike), it seemed to be only a matter of time before the tanks broke through Indian defences. By 0730

hours, 9 Deccan Horse, led by its CO Lieutenant Colonel AS Vaidya (who went on to become the army chief in the mid-1980s), put up a stiff resistance although the Sherman tanks were far inferior to the Pattons. Utilising the standing crops, the tanks of Deccan Horse managed to destroy 11 tanks while losing four of their own. Three other Pakistani tanks were damaged by medium guns and tankhunting parties. Despite the losses, the Pakistani armour kept up the advance.

Fortunately, when a readjustment of battalions was ordered the previous day, 4 Grenadiers was told to dig in at a village called Chima, not very far from where Deccan Horse first came in contact with the advancing Pattons. By early morning of 8 September, 4 Grenadiers had dug trenches and formed a compact defensive area. Little did they know then that this precaution of digging trenches would come in handy over the next couple of days. Colonel AR Khan, a young officer in those days, remembers: ‘Since our stance suddenly changed from offensive to defensive, we did not have enough mines or defensive equipment, but all of us had braced for the big offensive that was about to come down on us.’

The heavy losses in the morning had compelled the Pakistanis to retreat. The next attack began after a considerable gap, at around 1130 hours. The attack was led by a regiment of Pattons, a squadron of Chaffees, and a motorised battalion of the Pakistani 4 Armoured Brigade (see [map 12](#)). They attacked 1/9 Gorkha Rifles’ and 4 Grenadiers’ locations at Asal Uttar and Chima, respectively.



Indian troops on a captured Pakistani tank

The attack was partially successful in 1/9 Gorkha Rifles’ location, but failed to make headway through the 4 Grenadiers area. The Pakistanis again attacked 4 Grenadiers at 1200 hours. What followed was a David versus Goliath battle.

Colonel Khan remembers the scene and recounts it in full detail: ‘Since we were anticipating the armour thrust, four RCL guns were deployed to face the enemy tanks. Emboldened by the easy run through the 1/9 Gorkha location, the

Pakistani tanks were advancing with a carefree attitude, but as the 4 RCL guns opened up, they had nowhere to run. Although in other circumstances locating an RCL gun position is easy for the adversary since its “back blast” gives away its position, the standing crops in Punjab allowed us to hide the gun locations very well. Our boys skilfully manoeuvred the RCL guns and kept changing the locations. Moreover, the boys were cool and composed. No one panicked. That our defences were close to each other and we could see each other helped boost the team morale. In one instance, the crew of the MMG, well-dug in the trenches, allowed a tank to come close enough and then let loose a deadly burst. The Pakistani tank stopped abruptly, and the crew ran for their lives. During the lull in the fighting, when the abandoned tank was searched, it was discovered that it was the squadron commander Major Gardner’s tank, with his diary still lying in the tank. Apparently that diary still has a place of pride in the Indian Army’s Military Intelligence School in Pune!’



Abandoned Pakistani tanks in Punjab

On 9 September too, the enemy armour tried to break through the defences but in vain. India’s 4 Grenadiers stuck to its position. Pakistan’s 1st Armoured Division, impatient and irritated by the lack of progress, made their assault on 10 September with renewed effort. That’s when the real battle took place.

Company Quarter Master Havildar (CQMH) Abdul Hamid, a senior instructor in the battalion, had handled the RCL guns for a number of years. In the Chima village defence, he and his detachment were a vital part of 4 Grenadiers.

That day, the 1st Armoured Division, stung by its inability to penetrate the Indian defences, was determined to pierce through the 4 Grenadiers line that was standing between them and the city of Amritsar. As the tanks advanced menacingly, Abdul Hamid, who was commander of an RCL gun detachment, moved out to a flanking position with his gun mounted on a jeep, under intense enemy shelling and tank fire. Taking an advantageous position, he knocked out the leading enemy tank and then, swiftly changing his position, sent another tank up in flames. By this time the enemy tanks in the area spotted him and brought his jeep under concentrated machine-gun and high-explosive fire. Undeterred, Abdul Hamid kept firing on yet another enemy tank with his recoilless gun. While doing so, he was

mortally wounded by an enemy high-explosive shell. In his death, Abdul Hamid destroyed not only tanks but perhaps also the confidence of Pakistan's most vital formation. Not surprisingly, he was awarded the nation's highest gallantry award, the Param Vir Chakra, the first of the two awarded in the 1965 war. Part of the citation read: 'As the Havildar Abdul Hamid's brave action inspired his comrades to put up a gallant fight and to beat back the heavy tank assault by the enemy. His complete disregard for his personal safety during the operation and his sustained acts of bravery in the face of constant enemy fire were a shining example not only to his unit but also to the whole division and were in the highest traditions of the Indian Army.'



Captured Patton tanks



A beaming Lal Bahadur Shastri with triumphant troops

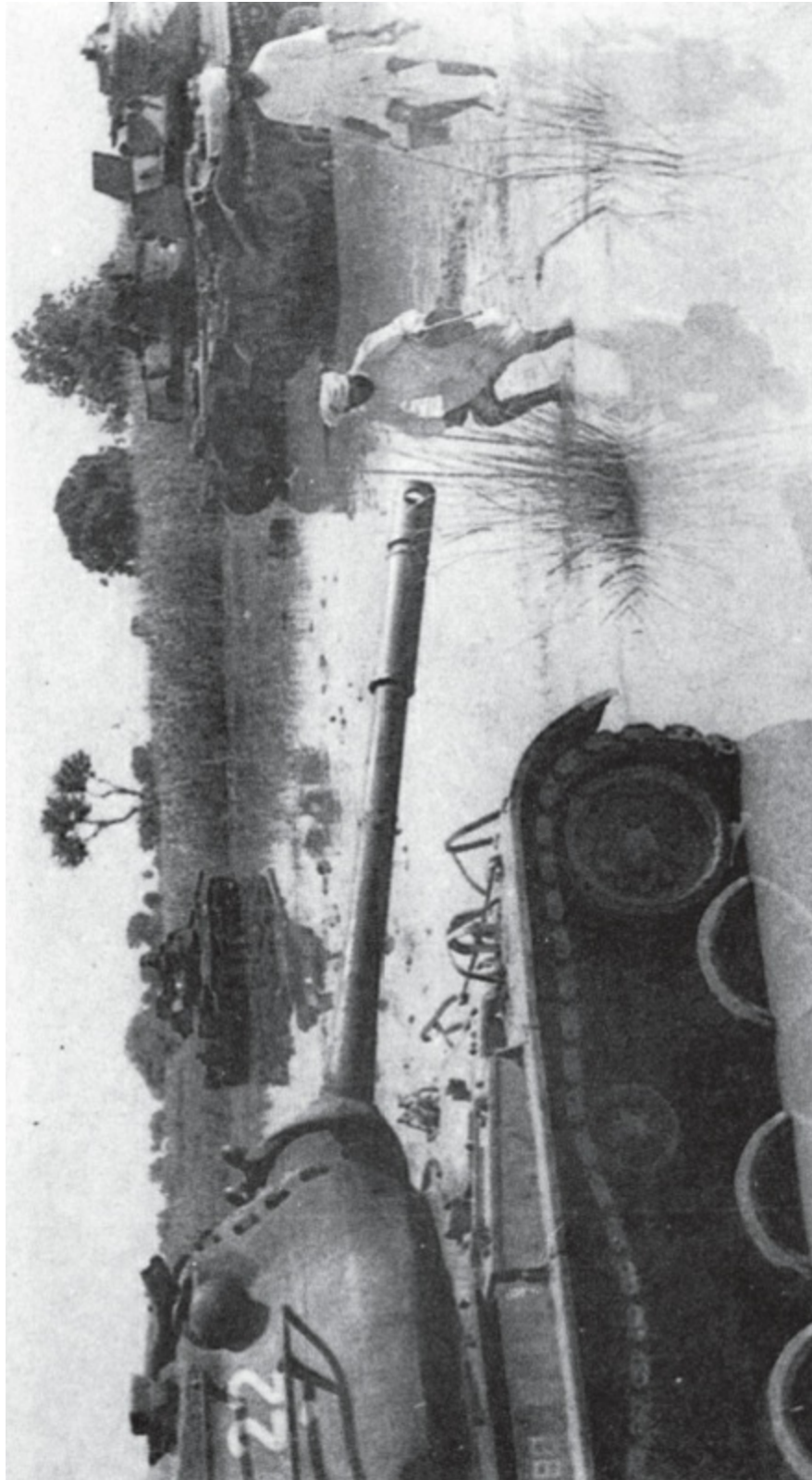
The 4 Grenadiers had delayed the advance of the 1st Armoured Division, thereby allowing the 2 Independent Armoured Brigade to quickly reorganise itself and take on the Pattons the next day at Bhikhiwind. Colonel Khan remembers: ‘Abdul Hamid was greatly assisted by Lieutenant Pantaki, who, perched atop a tree, would spot a Pakistani tank and pass on the message to Abdul Hamid, who would blast the enemy tank. Lieutenant Pantaki was shot in the head and fell on the ground, but survived. He won the Vir Chakra but lost his memory because of the injury in the head.’



President S. Radhakrishnan being briefed by army officers

The 4 Grenadiers was to have one more achievement to its credit. Recalls Colonel Khan: ‘Hours after Havildar Abdul Hamid sacrificed his life, the GOC of Pakistan’s 1st Armoured Division had come deep into Chima village, accompanied by commander of the artillery brigade, Brigadier Shami, in a jeep. When it was barely 50 metres from the C Company location, Grenadier Ghulam Mohammed shouted, “thum—kaun aati hai” (stop! who’s that?). Brigadier Shami, realising he was too close to an Indian Army post, shot Ghulam Mohammed with his pistol. Watching Ghulam Mohammed fall on the ground, Naik Naushal Ali, manning the MMG, and Grenadier Kalu Shafique with his LMG opened up instantly, killing Brigadier Shami. As the two let loose a barrage, the GOC of 1st Armoured Division and his staff officer were also injured, but they managed to crawl into the sugarcane fields. Meanwhile, the commandant of Pakistan’s 24 Armoured Regiment, who was following the GOC’s jeep, also opened up, but one of our RCL gunners hit the tank accurately, setting it ablaze. The encounter created great confusion in the Pakistani ranks. The tanks retreated.’

Had it not been for the bravery of Havildar Abdul Hamid and the doggedness of the 4 Grenadiers troops between 8 and 10 September, who knows what havoc Pakistan’s 1st Armoured Division, equipped with the mighty Pattons, would have caused. Perhaps Amritsar would have been threatened. Perhaps the war would have taken a different turn, but all that is now a matter of speculation. Once the Pakistani advance was halted by a combination of armour and infantry defence line, the Indian armour went for a kill.



Pakistan's Pattons trapped in the flooded fields of Khem Karan

After regrouping, when Pakistan's 1st Armoured Division tried to outflank the Indian defence, it was ably countered by the prepositioned tanks of 3 Cavalry. Attacks were made at dawn on 9 September along both the axes. During the afternoon, the Pakistanis made an attempt to outflank from the southeast but failed as

they got bogged down in the flooded area at Valtoha and were destroyed one by one. As the attack on 4 Grenadiers failed, the Pakistani outflanking armour charged on Mahmudpura but they were decimated by the Centurions lying in wait, crushing Pakistan's 1st Armoured Division.

The Pakistani armour made two more attempts to seek a breakthrough at 1600 hours and 1730 hours, but lost four tanks in the engagements. In defeating the Pakistani tank thrust, 3 Cavalry led by Lieutenant Colonel Salim Caleb played a vital role. The regiment destroyed many Pattons in several engagements. Lieutenant Colonel Caleb was decorated with the Maha Vir Chakra for displaying exceptional leadership in the tank battle. The 9 Deccan Horse played a crucial role in delaying the advance of the Pakistani armour on the Asal Uttar–Chima axis and also inflicted heavy casualties on it. Lieutenant Colonel AS Vaidya, CO of the regiment, earned a Maha Vir Chakra for exceptional leadership during this tank battle.

Thus, the Pakistani offensive completely abated by the evening and 1st Armoured Division, the pride of the Pakistani Army, limped backed to Kasur, badly mauled. The commanding officer of Pakistan's 4 Cavalry was captured in the sugarcane fields. Other officers and men of 4 Cavalry started surrendering on the following morning. The Pakistani armoured division, which was directed to capture all territory west of the Beas river and to outflank the XI Corps, was forced to fall back on Kasur.

The Pakistanis lost 97 tanks including 72 Pattons; of the tanks that were captured, 32 were fully operational. In contrast, India lost only five tanks. India had won what was subsequently acknowledged as the biggest tank battle fought after World War II.

It is now apparent that Pakistan had grand plans but poor execution. India, on the other hand, displayed a keen tactical sense, resolute leadership, and clever improvisation to turn the tide of the war. The battle also showed that the man behind the weapon is more important than the weapon itself. The Pakistanis had the Patton tank that had night-fighting capabilities, but were unable to handle it effectively.

Deccan Horse and the regiments of 2 Independent Armoured Brigade were adept in handling Shermans, Centurions and AMX tanks, which were of World War II vintage. In assaults led by armour, infantry must move with the armour and not be separated. This leads to tanks falling prey to anti-tank weapons, an aspect that was craftily exploited by Abdul Hamid. Demoralised by the setback at Khem Karan, Pakistan lost the heart to fight further. Today, a memorial for those who fought and won bravely in this sector aptly displays the board Patton Wreckers in the general area of Asal Uttar and Khem Karan. It's a reminder that no matter how good the weapon, the battle is won by those who wield it effectively.

The Renewed Attack on Dograi

Indeed, the daring initiative of the Indian soldier was to prove decisive once

again just towards the end of the war, on 21 and 22 September. The 3 Jat battalion, commanded by Lt Col Desmond Hayde, had on 6 September dashed across the IB to Dograi, a small but well-defended Pakistani village and had crossed the bridge over the canal to Batapore on the west bank just a few miles outside Lahore, only to be called back by the brigade headquarters, which was unaware of the achievement of the unit.



Dograi, as seen from the air two weeks after the battle



Soldiers from 3 Jat at Dograi, Ichhogil Canal

The battalion returned to the firm base at Santpura and was deployed there for the next 15 days. During this time they held steadfastly to their positions, fending off several determined counter-attacks by the enemy. Col Hayde also ensured that the battalion carried out aggressive patrolling of no man's land, keeping constant pressure on the enemy. Meanwhile, on 18 September, the battalion was overjoyed to hear on the All India Radio news that Col Hayde had been awarded the Maha Vir Chakra.

On 17 September, Brigadier Niranjana Singh gave the order for the capture of Dograi on the night of 21–22 September, with one infantry battalion to capture Mile 13; the attack was to commence at 2330 hours on 21 September and 3 Jat was to capture Dograi and the canal area, the attack to commence at 0130 hours on 22 September.

Lt Col Hayde gave his orders for the attack on 21 September at 1700 hours, after he gave the rifle company objectives, timings, routes, a movement plan and artillery fire support. He delved into the basic philosophy of the attack, which was leadership. It converted to first, 'follow your leader' – the sections, the Section Commander, the NCOs the Platoon Commander who would in turn follow the Company Commanders. Second, shoot at anything you see or even at any spot that looks dangerous on your way to the objective. Third, once on the objective, settle down fast, get your firing positions and shoot anything that moves. Naik Siri Ram had already told his section if he was hit or injured, he should be carried forward to

the objective; this thought was omnipresent in 3 Jat. The call was 'Follow me!'

Capturing Dograi proved to be difficult. The village had a builtup area with extensive concrete pillboxes, bunkers and trenches connecting the defences. Houses became fortified areas with overhead cover and protected by sand bags and gunny bags filled with sand, while the higher vantage points became observation areas to direct fire and control the operations. Each road or gali became a killing ground for a well-entrenched enemy, the darkness of the night aiding the defender and forcing the attacker to clear each house to avoid being hit from the rear. Fighting in a built-up area is a nightmare for troops when the objective has not been destroyed with artillery fire. The dust and smoke further aggravates the difficulty in identifying friend or foe.

During the next few hours, there was a bitter contest of hand-to-hand fighting. Pillbox by pillbox, the sections and platoons fought, clearing each by sheer grit, raw courage and determination. Each building was either cleared or subdued by fire. Molotov cocktails, pole charges, grenades, rocket launchers, small arms and bayonets were used with great effect. Slowly but surely, 3 Jat gained ascendancy and the objectives were captured. However, resistance continued into the early hours of the night.

The battalion won three MVCs, four Vir Chakras, seven Sena Medals, 12 Mention-in-Despatches and eight Commendation Cards. This was the peak of the bravery, determination, and willpower of 3 Jat under Col Hayde.

Describing the battle of Dograi in his book, *Behind the Scene*, Maj Gen Joginder Singh wrote: 'This was the most magnificent battle fought in the entire XI Corps, where offensive spirit and will to win at any cost was displayed by this brave unit commanded by a stalwart CO.' Gen Harbaksh said the Dograi battle 'will go down in history as one of the toughest ever fought.'



The COAS at Dograi on 23 Sept. flanked by Lt Col DE Hayde, MVC, CO 3 Jat and Brigadier Niranjjan Singh, MC, Commander 54 Inf Bde



Lal Bahadur Shastri Congratulating Lt Col DE Hayde, CO 3 Jat

Overall, the XI Corps acquitted itself well in defensive action but failed to achieve the main objective of capturing all territory east of Ichhogil. The Indian plan to shift the defence line from the international border to Ichhogil Canal was

conceptually sound but its execution was not in sync with the aim.

In the final analysis, as General Harbakhsh puts it across, ‘...with more aggressive leadership and imaginative direction of operation at divisional level and below, XI Corps might have achieved a unique distinction in the annals of Indian military history.’ And yet, this was the sector which witnessed all that is right with the Indian Army: Bravery, initiative, leadership and commitment displayed by both officers and men who made India proud.

A Tale of Missed Opportunities

A Knockout Punch that Wasn't

Although the original plan by army HQ and Western Command – in the event of a Pakistani threat to Jammu and Kashmir – had envisaged simultaneous offensives by XI Corps and the still-in-the-raising-stage I Corps, delay in mobilisation of I Corps elements in forward locations meant that XI Corps troops crossed the international boundary in the Lahore sector much earlier, specifically on the night of 5–6 September. Meanwhile, I Corps was still organising its forces in the Sialkot sector on 8 September.

Despite the 48-hour delay, it was important to open the Samba–Jammu–Sialkot sector to ease the pressure on Chhamb. The area was well chosen by Indian military planners. It was between the Ravi and Chenab rivers, the border running close to the foothills in the east. Sialkot, a major town in Pakistan, was just 14 km from the border, while Jammu was exactly double that distance from the border that ran through a narrow stretch along the lower foothills.

Before getting into details of the operations and the importance of putting pressure on Sialkot, it is vital to understand the lay of the land on the Pakistani side. In 1965, Sialkot was connected to Lahore by rail through the Wazirabad–Gujranwala area. Sialkot served as a vital supply point for the Chhamb sector. A railway line from Sialkot to Pasrur was vital for the defence forces of Pakistan, and Chawinda town on this line was considered tactically crucial. As far as the road network was concerned, the Sialkot–Phillora–Lahore road passed through Shakargarh. The terrain was flat and full of cultivated fields, mainly irrigated by the Degh nadi, considered fordable by 4×4 vehicles. Another river, the Aik nadi, was however a little more difficult to cross than Degh nadi. The biggest obstacle for tanks was—like in the Lahore sector—the Marla–Ravi Link (MRL) Canal extending from north to south, running parallel to the west of the Sialkot–Pasrur line. The MRL Canal was 100 metres wide.

And yet, Sialkot was a suitable target. After much discussion, the I Corps headquarter was established at Kaluchak, not very far from Jammu. In September 1965, I Corps was not at its full strength although its order of battle (ORBAT) included the following:

- 1st Armoured Division (Commanded by Major General Rajinder Singh ‘Sparrow’)
- 6 Mountain Division (Major General SK Korla)
- 14 Infantry Division (Major General RK Ranjeet Singh)
- 26 Infantry Division (Major General ML Thapan)

The line-up looked impressive but I Corps was still under strength simply be-

cause two of its four divisions were far from fully raised. The 4 Mountain Division, raised six months after the Chinese debacle, had only two mountain brigades (69 and 99) and neither were ready for war in the plains, raised as they were for fighting in the mountains. Neither was 14 Infantry Division fully raised. Its two infantry brigades, 35 and 58, were deployed in the high mountains till August. The third brigade, 116, joined the division just a month before moving to Jammu from Babina. Only 1st Armoured Division and 26 Infantry Division were suitably located and had trained for plains warfare. The elements of I Corps mentioned above had never trained together, and for that matter, they had never even interacted with each other.

The administrative and logistics support was far from ideal. The corps did not have third-line transport support. Civil vehicles, whichever were available, were commandeered to fill the gaps.

I Corps was assigned the task of advancing to the eastern flank of the MRL Canal after securing the area of Pagowal, Phillora and Chawinda.

The Indian attack was planned in three phases. In Phase I, troops of 6 Mountain Division were to block the possible ingress of Pakistani forces on to the Pathankot–Samba road. This was to be followed by Phase II in which the strike force (mainly 1st Armoured Division) was to concentrate on the forward area in preparation of the actual offensive. In Phase III, 6 Mountain Division and 26 Infantry Division were to secure the right flank of the main thrust by capturing the two crucial areas of Maharajke–Charwa and Bajragarhi–Anula nearby. This, as per the plan, would be like establishing a ‘bridgehead’ across the international border to act as a springboard for 1st Armoured Division’s thrust into Pakistani territory. The 14 Infantry Division was to secure the Ikhmal area to protect the left flank. These tasks on the left and right flanks were to be completed by early morning of 8 September.

The fourth and final phase was to be the actual moving out by 1st Armoured Division from the ‘bridgehead’ into Phillora and Chawinda on way to the MRL Canal.

Pakistan, aware of the possibility of an Indian attack in this area, had deployed its own 1 Corps in the Sialkot sector. The Pakistani 1 Corps comprised of 15 Division and 6 Armoured Division. Formed in 1956, the Pakistani 1 Corps’ area of operational responsibility extended from river Chenab in the north to Sulaimanke (River Satluj) in the south. Earlier it had 1st Armoured Division, 6 Armoured Division, and 10, 11 and 15 divisions in its ORBAT. The corps was under the command of Lieutenant General Bakhtiar Rana, whose basic qualifications were described as extreme loyalty and limited intellect by many contemporaries. In early September, the frontage of the corps was reduced to the area between Ravi and Chenab rivers, or simply the Ravi–Chenab Corridor, and its under-command formations were reduced to 6 Armoured Division and 15 Division. The Pakistani 15

Division (four infantry brigades, four tank regiments) was designated to defend the area of responsibility, while the newly formed 6 Armoured Division (previously known as 100 Armoured Brigade) was the main strategic reserve in the area.

So, 48 hours after the XI Corps had crossed the international border in the Lahore sector, elements of 1 Corps were now ready to launch an offensive in the Sialkot sector.

On the intervening night of 7–8 September, 1965, Operation Nepal (see [map 13](#)), the name given to the thrust in the Sialkot sector, rolled out.

As mentioned earlier, the initial thrust was to be carried out by 6 Mountain Division. The GOC, 6 Mountain Division was assigned the task of leading the charge into Maharajke and Charwa to 69 Mountain Brigade and to 99 Mountain Brigade, respectively.

For the 99 Mountain Brigade, the first objective was Charwa village. It was a well-fortified village with elaborate defensive works. Appreciating the difficulty of assaulting the village in the darkness, the brigade commander decided to first secure the forming-up places. Two companies of a Gorkha Rifles Battalion crossed the international border at 2030 hours on 7 September, and secured the area in the next two hours.

Once the troops concentrated in the forming-up area, 2/5 Gorkha Rifles and 4 Rajputana Rifles (Raj Rif) crossed the start line at 2300 hours. They were given intense artillery cover fire. The Gorkhas were swift in capturing the objective after evicting a Rifle company and a company of the Mujahids. The 4 Raj Rif troops were similarly successful in clearing the area assigned to them. The Mujahids vacated the area in a hurry, leaving behind a large quantity of arms and ammunition. The task was accomplished much ahead of the estimate, allowing both the Gorkhas as well as Raj Rif troops to advance further towards the roads coming to Charwa from Maharajke and Ikhmal, although pockets of resistance did remain in Charwa village, which was established as a key defensive position with a network of underground interconnected tunnels.

The attack on Maharajke by 69 Mountain Brigade was planned in two phases. In Phase I, 3 Madras and 9 Kumaon were to capture the right half of the objective and block the road to Pagowal and Sialkot. In the next phase, 4 Madras was to capture the left half of the village and block the road to Charwa and Zafarwal.

By 1700 hours on 7 September, two companies of 4 Madras secured the forming-up place to the south-east of Jabwal Kalan. In the next five hours, 3 Madras and 9 Kumaon firmed up and launched the operation at 2300 hours. The right half of the objective was secured against light enemy opposition (more than a company) by 0130 hours.

In the next phase, 4 Madras launched the attack at 0300 hours. This time, it encountered stiff resistance as heavy MMG and small-arms fire held up the assault.

At this stage, Lieutenant Colonel HL Mehta, CO of the unit, rushed forward to lead the assault and the objective was secured by 0530 hours.

Lieutenant Colonel Mehta led one of his reserve companies in person and, in a tactically sound outflanking move, inspired his unit in the foremost line of attack. The men pressed home the attack with fierce determination. The enemy stronghold could not withstand the gallant charge of the Madrasis and ran away. Lieutenant Colonel Mehta, who fell to an enemy bullet, was posthumously decorated with a Maha Vir Chakra for exceptional courage and leadership.

As mentioned earlier, 26 Infantry Division was tasked with securing the right flank of the Indian thrust and holding the Sialkot sector. Two formations (162 Infantry Brigade and 168 Infantry Brigade) under it went into the offensive on the night of 7–8 September. Wains, to the north of Aik nadi, was to be captured by 162 Infantry Brigade, while Bajra Garhi was to be captured by 168 Infantry Brigade.

On 7 September, the 162 Brigade comprising 6 Jat, 7 Jat and 1 Sikh Light Infantry was supported by the C Squadron of 18 Cavalry. Two artillery brigades—26 and 1—were also placed in support. On the night of 7–8 September, 1 Sikh Light Infantry launched Phase I and captured Point 857, while 7 Jat took control of Wains. Braving heavy artillery fire and stiff resistance, the two battalions consolidated the brigade sector before first light on 8 September.

The 2/1 Gorkha Rifles, 5/4 Gorkha Rifles and 8 JAK Rifles made up the infantry units of 168 Infantry brigade. They were supported by the A Squadron of 18 Cavalry; 168 Field Regiment provided the artillery backup. By 0530 hours on 8 September, Anula and Bajra Garhi were being controlled by the Indian forces. The 6 Mountain Division and 26 Infantry Division had thus established a bridgehead at Wains and Charwa–Maharajke to threaten Sialkot.

Understandably, Pakistan reacted with fury. Massive artillery fire was brought down on the well-entrenched Indian positions, but the troops of 26 Infantry Division and 6 Mountain Division held firm. According to all accounts, in fact 18 Cavalry probed the Ura Bridge just 8 km short of Sialkot and took on the Shermans and Chaffees sent out by the Pakistanis. The Indians lost one tank but crippled four of the Pakistani tanks in the brief encounter before the A Squadron of 18 Cavalry returned to the firm base.

Time was now ripe for the Indian spearhead—the 1st Armoured Division—to launch its main advance. It was 8 September.

Onward to Phillora

At 0600 hours on 8 September, the 1st Armoured Division crossed into Pakistan, the advance led by two columns: the 1st Armoured Brigade on the left and the 43 Lorried Brigade on the right. The offensive was planned as follows:

- 1st Armoured Brigade, commanded by Brigadier KK Singh, was to advance along the Ramgarh–Kangre–Sabzkot– Chobara axis onward to

Phillora.

- Brigadier HS Dhillon was commanding the 43 Lorried Infantry Brigade. It was assigned to advance on the Deoli– Sabzpir crossroads– Mastpur–Pagowal axis.
- The 4 Horse regimental group and one company of motor battalion were kept as reserve.
- A squadron of 62 Cavalry was to guard the left flank of the 1st Armoured Division thrust by operating west of the Degh nadi.
- Artillery support was to be provided by 1 Artillery Brigade, then commanded by Brigadier OP Malhotra, who later went on to become the chief of army staff.

The march of the right column, however, slowed down as the rains on 7 September had softened the earth. Some tanks of 2 Lancers got bogged down, while the brigade's vehicle column could not move cross-country. The right column to therefore had detour via Ramgarh. The left column pushed forward smoothly with 17 Horse on the left and 16 Cavalry (Commanded by Lt Col KS Sidhu Brar) on the right, going past Sabzpur and Chobara.

At 0930 hours, 16 Cavalry encountered some enemy tanks, recoilless guns and dug-in infantry in the Gadgor area. An encounter ensued and 16 Cavalry destroyed eight enemy tanks and two RCL guns. Commanded by Lieutenant Colonel AB Tarapore, 17 Poona Horse also encountered similar resistance in the Tharoh area, south-east of Phillora. A serious tank-to-tank fight followed and in this the Pakistani Air Force also participated. The regiment still managed to knock out three Pakistan tanks and one RCL gun. Knowing that Pakistan was pushing more tanks in the battle area, the GOC, 1st Armoured Division, ordered his reserve regiment (4 Horse) to encounter them on one flank.

Pakistan had deployed only one armoured regiment, 25 Cavalry, in the area.

Overall, if Indian commanders showed lack of courage or were confused, Pakistan was in no better shape. When the Indian offensive started, Brigadier Abdul Ali Malik, the commander of Pakistan's 24 Brigade, knew little about tank warfare and had no idea of the quantum of troops opposite him. In contrast, the commanding officer of 25 Cavalry, Lieutenant Colonel Nisar, was a capable armour officer. In addition, 25 Cavalry was, to the Pakistani Army's good luck, a newly raised but extremely fine tank regiment, having on its strength some outstanding officers, not merely on paper but also in terms of bravery in the face of enemy and in extraordinary situations. Malik, who had no clue about the situation in his front, asked Nisar to help. Thus, Brigadier Malik abdicated the conduct of battle to the commanding officer of a tank regiment that was under his command! According to Major (retd) Agha Humayaun Amin, an armoured corps officer in the Pakistani Army who has researched and written extensively on the 1965 armoured battles, 'Lieutenant

Colonel Nisar immediately ordered the tank squadron (B Squadron) commanded by Major Ahmad (originally from Guides Cavalry and an extremely brave leader of men) to advance in an extended order towards Charwa, the reported point of enemy breakthrough. After tasking one of the squadrons to advance towards Charwa, Nisar alerted the remaining part of the regiment to move towards Chawinda. At 0730 hours, Nisar sent another squadron (A Squadron) towards Tharoh on receiving reports that Indian armour was seen opposite Tharoh area. At 1130 hours, Nisar sent C Squadron to the area west of Gadgor. In short, by 1200 hours the whole of 25 Cavalry had deployed three squadrons in line abreast of the Indian 1st Armoured Brigade opposite, leading the advance of the Indian 1st Armoured Division. The B Squadron of 25 Cavalry came in contact with the advancing tanks of the Indian 1st Armoured Division near Gadgor. The Indian 16 Light Cavalry was supported by a Gurkha infantry battalion on the right, advancing towards Phillora, and Poona Horse on the left advancing towards the Tharoh crossroads. Both the tank regiments had a clean run during the first 15 km of their advance inside Pakistan. According to the Indian armoured corps historian, the Pakistan Air Force aircraft attacked the leading Indian armour elements at about 8.40 am at Chobara but were unable to hit any tank.

‘The 16 Light Cavalry advancing two troops up came in contact with (Pakistani) 25 Cavalry’s tanks advancing in extended order towards Chobara, without a clue that the Indian 1st Armoured Division was just a few miles away. The 25 Cavalry’s Bravo Squadron commanded by Major Ahmad, suddenly at approximately 50 to 200 metres, came in contact with two leading tank troops of 16 Light Cavalry.

‘Some of Ahmad’s tanks had taken fire positions, while some were in the open. The Indians were on the move. A confused firefight followed in which both sides lost tanks, Pattons burning on being hit and Centurions getting shot through both sides! Both the leading Indian tank troop leaders were killed, leaving the leading squadron commander of 16 Light Cavalry clueless. Major Ahmad of 25 Cavalry carried the day by fighting from the front, inspiring his men to fight till death, rather than withdraw an inch. It was during this firefight that Major Ahmad, who had already changed his tank once, was severely burnt after having personally destroyed four tanks. There is no doubt that it was Major Ahmad who saved the Pakistani position at Gadgor by fighting from the front and injecting in his men real steel. He was the only squadron commander in 25 Cavalry who led from the front and was the only major who proved himself equal to the crisis in 25 Cavalry. Major Shamshad, one of the direct participants in that battle, gave the same verdict. The 16 Cavalry CO tried to bring up another squadron, commanded by Major MAR Shiekh, to outflank the Pakistani position in front from the east. The space for manoeuvre was, however, extremely limited, with Poona Horse, the leftforward

Indian unit, being just 4,000 metres away from the right-forward unit. In the process of manoeuvring, this second squadron exposed its broadsides to the 25 Cavalry tanks of Alpha Squadron, losing many tanks including that of Major Shiekh, who received a head injury and died in hospital. Finally this second squadron was held up, having lost its squadron commander and unable to manoeuvre due to limited visibility and lack of space to manoeuvre.'

Once the second squadron was held up, CO of 16 Light Cavalry passed 'exaggerated' reports to the 1st Armoured Brigade commander, who in turn ordered 16 Light Cavalry not to advance any further.

The C Squadron of 62 Cavalry, given the task of protecting the left flank by operating to the west of Degh nadi, could not keep pace with the advancing 1st Armoured Brigade owing to ground conditions. Major General Gurcharan Singh Sandhu (retd), author of *The Indian Armour: History of the Indian Armoured Corps (1941–1971)*, reveals: 'Due to some confusion in transmission of orders, the squadron second-in-command believed that he had to go to Zafarwal. The half-squadron commander waited for some time at the border for its promised close-support infantry and then decided to carry on, on his own. No opposition was met and in Zafarwal, tanks were ceremoniously received by the locals, who said they had no quarrel with India. The brigade HQ was said to have been informed of the location of the squadron and was further told that the half-squadron would have to return because it had no close-support infantry. This transmission was allegedly acknowledged but apparently the brigade commander remained unaware of the development. At about 1300 hours, the half squadron crossed back through the Degh nadi and approached Kangre from the east. A battery of medium guns deployed there in support of 1st Armoured Brigade, on seeing tanks approach from the east, took them to be hostile (Pakistani tanks) and opened fire. The 62 Cavalry tanks returned the fire and destroyed several guns and B vehicles.'

Clearly, lack of intelligence, lack of coordination, deceptive moves by the opponent, and sheer incompetence created confusion among the Indian commanders. The commander of 1 Armoured Brigade concluded that he was being opposed by two Patton regiments and that his left flank was insecure. Consequently, he decided to withdraw the brigade into a defensive box around Sabzpir crossroads.

Major General Gurcharan Singh Sandhu offers his analysis: 'The first day's battle could not have got off to a worse start. The armoured brigade had been blocked by two squadrons of Pattons, and in the first encounter the brigade had lost more tanks than the enemy had. At the end of the day, the division was practically back to where it started. The lorried brigade had not even made a start and contributed nothing to the day's battle. The division's stage-management coordination and staff work was so poor that there were a number of clashes between its own units and formations. The whole of 1 Corps had gained a few kilometres. The

worst consequence of the day's battle was its paralysing effect on the minds of the higher commanders. It took them another 48 hours to contemplate the next offensive move. This interval gave the Pakistanis time to move up and deploy their 6 Armoured Division with five additional armour regiments. In fact, the golden opportunity that fate had offered the 1st Armoured Division to make worthwhile gains had been irretrievably lost.'

General Gurbaksh is more scathing. He writes: 'A study of the plan for the breakout phase reveals some glaring weaknesses in tactical concepts and a departure from the basic principles governing the employment of an armoured division. The main fighting elements of the armoured division, the armoured and the lorried brigades, designed to function as one integrated team, were assigned independent missions and launched along two divergent axes. The separation of the lorried brigade from the armoured brigade compounded the weaknesses of both. The divergent axes permitted neither coordination nor cohesion of effort; it was like driving in a wedge from the wrong side.

'The pattern of offensive was more in the nature of two ineffective prongs functioning out of tune with each other, instead of a thrust in force on a narrow frontage calculated to penetrate deep into the vitals of the enemy. The armoured brigade, stripped of its mobile infantry complement, found itself without the stability and security so essential for a decisive stroke to send the enemy reeling to a collapse. A thrust along the single axis or two parallel and converging axes would have permitted the close coordination of both these major fighting components of the armoured division for lightning action deep into enemy territory. In the event, however, we made only ineffective jabs—mere superficial wounds instead of a deep mortal gash that would have laid the enemy low from the very start.'

Regrouping, Consolidation and Renewed Attack

Badly shaken and feeling insulted by the events of 8 September, the higher leadership in 1 Corps as well as 1st Armoured Division sat down for a review and came up with a major plan for another attack. Lieutenant General PO Dunn, GOC of 1 Corps, issued an operational instruction to capture Phillora and thence Chawinda. Regrouping of forces was also ordered. The 35 Infantry Brigade and one battalion from the 116 Infantry Brigade were placed in support of 1st Armoured Division. The integral artillery brigade of 6 Mountain Division and 1 Corps Artillery were also placed at the disposal of the offensive force.

After extensive reconnaissance, Major General Rajinder Singh 'Sparrow', GOC, 1st Armoured Division, decided to launch an attack through an opening in the area of Rurki-Kalan to Phillora. It was an unconventional choice. The area was full of paddy and sugarcane plantation. Moreover, there were many hostile elements, like the Mujahids, on the loose in the area. In a measure of deception, 1st Armoured Brigade was to feign attack to entice the adversary armour towards

Sabzpir. To conduct the operation, Major General Sparrow ordered the concentration of troops as follows:

(a) 1st Armoured Brigade was to concentrate near Rurki–Kalan before midnight on 10–11 September to keep the move secret. Interestingly, tank noise was to be drowned by heavy artillery shelling.

(b) The 43 Lorried Brigade was to leave one battalion (8 Garhwal) supported by a depleted 62 Cavalry.

(c) The 35 Infantry Briagde supported by 2 Lancers (without one squadron) was to hold firm in the area of Sabzpir crossroads.

(d) The 5 Raj Rif supported by the remaining squadron of 62 Cavalry and one squadron of 2 Lancers was to hold firm at Kangre.

(e) The 1 Artillery Brigade was to redeploy in the area west of Sabzpir to support 1st Armoured Division's assault on Phillora.

Before first light on 11 September, 1st Armoured Brigade was to move out from the harbour with three regiments up. From Rurki–Kalan, 4 Horse and 17 Poona Horse were to open out and encircle Phillora by a pincer movement on both flanks. The manoeuvre was intended to split enemy armour echelons into small isolated groups for subsequent destruction.

The Battle of Phillora

The launching of the Indian Armoured Division from an unexpected direction at first light on 11 September surprised the Pakistani commander, as he had expected an attack from the Zafarwal–Phillora or Chobara–Phillora axes. In fact, he had prepared defences to cover these two approaches. The crosscountry advance from the direction of Rurki–Kalan, therefore, greatly upset the defensive Pakistani mindset.

The Poona Horse had been detailed to lead the attack from the centre of the brigade's advance from Libbe, about halfway between Phillora and Bhagowal, and thereafter to advance towards Phillora in order to isolate it from the west and southwest. The C Squadron, led by Major Virender Singh, was held up by 4 Horse, which had not got clear of Rurki–Kalan. At 0800 hours, C Squadron got past the village but shortly afterwards came into contact with approximately a squadron of Pattons and tank destroyers deployed north-west of Libbe. Pakistani tanks opened fire at a range of about 800 metres. In the ensuing engagement, three Pakistani tanks were destroyed and two tanks of C Squadron were damaged. Lieutenant Colonel AB Tarapore deployed A Squadron led by Major DV Ghorpade to the right, west of Libbe, and B Squadron was ordered to extend to the east. In the meantime, the C Squadron destroyed another three tanks at the cost of one of its own. Enemy tanks withdrew before they could be cut off by the other squadrons. The 5/9 Gorkhas started to clear the built-up area and tall crops around Libbe, completing the task by 12 noon.

Lieutenant Colonel Tarapore left the Gorkhas to take charge of the Libbe area as he headed towards Phillora. The C Squadron headed for Phillora, the B Squadron crossed the road to cover the south-western approach to the objective, and the A Squadron came into reserve. The C Squadron accounted for six more tanks deployed to the north-west of Phillora and then occupied the high ground covering the town.



Indian tanks in action in the Sialkot sector

Meanwhile, 4 Horse was tasked to cover the eastern left flank and cut through the Charwa–Phillora road in Saboki area north of the road junction. The A and B squadrons of 4 Horse came up against Pakistani tanks deployed west of the road and covering the area from the crossroads right upto Gadgor. The Pakistani tanks in substantial strength were deployed about 1,000 metres west of the Charwa road. Both squadrons of 4 Horse started to engage enemy tanks systematically. The C Squadron, not to be left out, also moved up and deployed on the right of B Squadron.

The weight of fire brought by a whole regiment of Centurians was too much for the Pakistani deployment. Most of its tanks started to withdraw. There were burning Pattons strewn over the whole area and very few managed to get away towards Phillora. The enemy left behind 23 tanks burnt or destroyed. The 4 Horse had

meanwhile lost only one tank.

In this context, it may be mentioned that during the battle of Phillora, Lieutenant Colonel MMS Bakshi led 4 Horse in an exemplary manner. Although his tank was hit several times and finally caught fire, he crossed Libbe–Phillora road undeterred. At one stage, when Pakistani tanks surrounded him, Bakshi and his men escaped capture by taking cover in a sugarcane field. Finally his party was rescued by Poona Horse, led by Lieutenant Colonel Tarapore, who resumed the command of his regiment. Lieutenant Colonel Bakshi was awarded the Maha Vir Chakra for displaying exemplary courage and leadership. Meanwhile, Lieutenant Colonel Tarapore had been wounded during the day but carried on with his arm in a sling.

The grand finale had not yet arrived, though. The A Squadron and B Squadron of Poona Horse bunched up together to form a formidable force at Libbe. At this stage it was learnt that one squadron of Pakistani tank was moving from the direction of Alhar towards Phillora. The B Squadron of Poona Horse there upon adjusted its position to meet the approaching threat. The A Squadron also moved two tank troops to guard the west flank of B Squadron.



Indian soldiers holding up ammunition from a captured tank

At this juncture, two Pakistani tank troops came up from the direction of Kot Izzat, presumably with the intention of attacking the C Squadron of Poona Horse from the flank. The stage for a tank battle was set. The ground was open and the cover was available only in the form of the sugarcane fields. In the circumstances, security could be ensured only by fast movement of tanks. The battle took place between moving tanks at a range of only 100 yards and lasted for about 45 minutes. In this battle, the Pakistanis lost a total of 28 tanks as against one by Poona Horse. Two tanks were knocked out by Lieutenant Colonel Tarapore, the commanding officer. With the destruction of enemy armour, the main defences of Phillora had been breached. The objective was now open to an infantry assault. The battle of Phillora was won hands down by the Indian armour.

While the armour won the day decisively, the contribution of 43 Lorried Brigade, in particular 5 Jat and 5/9 Gorkha, was substantial. These two battalions kept on advancing alongside the armour despite attacks by the Pakistani Air Force. The Indian infantry consolidated its positions at Phillora after mopping up stray en-

emy-resistance pockets. The 26 Infantry Division meanwhile kept up its aggressive patrolling.

The corps HQ began to plan for the next phase. The target was Chawinda. But to do that, some smaller towns like Zafarwal and Pagowal needed to be captured and secured, so on 11 and 12 September the objectives were attacked but the forces could only secure Pagowal and failed to capture Zafarwal despite heavy fighting.

The stage was set for the attack on Chawinda on 13 September. That day, India's 1st Armoured Division was poised for an allout attack on Chawinda. It was decided that this area would be captured by a pincer move with 43 Lorried Infantry Brigade from the north, and 99 Mountain Brigade and 1st Armoured Brigade advancing from the north-west. The 1st Armoured Division was to cross the railway line at Sialkot–Chawinda with a view to encircle the town from the west as a preliminary move.

The advance commenced at dawn on 14 September. However, the Indian armour soon ran into a Pakistani anti-tank screen to the west of Phillora and the north of Alhar. Meanwhile, the Pakistani 6 Armoured Division was also thrown into the battle, giving it a distinct edge. The two regiments, originally part of 6 Armoured Division were sent to Chhamb but returned to their formation reinforcing the Pakistani tank strength in this area. Patton regiment kept the Indian armour engaged throughout the day and then withdrew to the west of the railway line. By dusk, the 1st Armoured Division had secured Kalewali and Alhar. In this encounter 18 Pakistani tanks and a number of recoilless guns were destroyed, but the progress of the battle was not up to expectations. As the armour failed to create a tactical precondition for an infantry assault on Chawinda, the impending attack of the 43 Lorried Infantry Brigade had to be called off.

Another review had to be ordered. Top commanders assembled on 16 September. At a conference attended by the corps commander and the commanders of 1st Armoured Division and 6 Mountain Division at Maharajke, fresh plans were made to capture Chawinda. The 6 Mountain Division was asked to capture Chawinda, while the responsibility of attacking Badiana and Zafarwal was given to 1st Armoured Division and 14 Infantry Division, respectively.

As elaborate plans were being made, the Indian intelligence was apparently unaware of the quantum of Pakistan armour concentrated in the Pasrur area. A headlong advance in the area was no longer feasible. The result of the new balance of force in this sector became apparent the next day.

Brigadier KK Singh's orders to 4 Horse for 16 September was to cross the railway line and secure the Sadreke area covering Chawinda–Badiana and Badiana–Pasrur. The Poona Horse was to capture Jassoran and Buttur Dograndi so that these could serve as bases for an attack on Chawinda by 6 Mountain Division during 16 and 17 September.

Little did the Indians know that they were about to walk into a trap set by the Pakistanis. The Pakistanis had deployed in addition to the reinforced the 6 Armoured Division, with the 4 Armoured Brigade comprising two of its regiments—5th Horse and 19th Lancers brought in from Khem Karan—in an arc extending from Chawinda to Badiana, with the gap between Chawinda and Jassoran to serve as a killing ground. The Pakistanis were confident that the Indian armour would walk into the trap and be massacred in the Jassoran area.

The Poona Horse under the Command of 8 Garhwal planned to first capture Jassoran with B Squadron, supported by the B Company. The C Squadron was to advance to Buttur Dograndi, followed by the Garhwalis who were to secure the village. The



Visitors inspecting a damaged Pakistani tank

B Squadron advanced to Jassoran and secured it by 0830 hours after destroying three Pakistani tanks. The B Company of the Garhwalis took another hour to clear it. As the preparation for an advance to Buttur was underway, the Pakistanis brought down heavy and sustained artillery fire in the area that was their killing ground. As the Indians were about to launch the offensive, the CO of 8 Garhwal was killed by a direct hit on his jeep. His death led to the Garhwalis getting disoriented, and their communication with the Poona Horse was disrupted. About 30 Garhwalis nevertheless managed to reach Jassoran and occupy the empty village.

As two squadrons of Poona Horse advanced to Buttur Dograndi, it soon be-

came apparent that the regiment had walked into a killing ground prepared meticulously by the Pakistanis. The whole area was now covered by tank fire, anti-tank fire, RCL guns and artillery guns. Three Indian tanks were hit. It seemed unwise to remain in the area, so Lieutenant Colonel Tarapore ordered a withdrawal to Jassoran. This was completed successfully by 1600 hours.

A fresh attack was launched to recapture Buttur with the whole of 8 Garhwal, which had reorganised, and A and C squadrons of Poona Horse. The attack was progressing satisfactorily because the enemy, which had moved back into Buttur, started to pull out once again. Lieutenant Colonel Tarapore dismounted from his tank and decided to have a mug of tea with other officers of the regimental HQ before proceeding to the objective. A medium artillery shell landed next to one of the tanks, killing Tarapore on the spot and fatally wounding Jasbir, the regimental signals officer.

Lieutenant Colonel Tarapore had personally led his regiment into the thick of fighting for the battle for Phillora when it broke through defences held by an equivalent force. He had been wounded but had decided to carry on with his arm in the sling. In the battle for Chawinda, he led his tanks twice into the middle of the enemy's killing ground, defying the enemy's efforts to prevent the outflanking of Chawinda. For his inspiring leadership, gallantry and determination, Lieutenant Colonel AB Tarapore was posthumously awarded the Param Vir Chakra.

His martyrdom notwithstanding, the Indians were unable to break into Chawinda or even hold on to Jassoran. Lack of coordination between the GOCs of 6 Mountain Division and 1st Armoured Division, and the lack of control at the corps level led to avoidable delays in launching crucial advances or carrying out systematic withdrawals.

General Harbakhsh writes candidly: 'In the wake of our deplorable performance in the first attempt on Chawinda by 1st Armoured Division, the fiasco in the battle of Chawinda–Badiana–Zafarwal complex added to the series of disappointing failures we had been courting ever since the outbreak from the bridgehead. A critical analysis of the battle reveals the following shortcomings:

(a) The approach to the battle was sluggish and complacent. The operation was being postponed day by day in a leisurely fashion. A peculiar smugness and inertia appeared to dominate the higher levels of command. At last, after much exhortation, the action was mounted on the night of 18–19 September, 72 hours too late. By this time the enemy had the much-badly-needed breather and had poised itself to meet our action halfway. The result was a foregone conclusion.

(b) The battle for Chawinda–Badiana–Zafarwal involved the coordinated action of three formations—1st Armoured Division, 6 Mountain Division and 14 Infantry Division. It was undoubtedly a corps battle at a very

crucial phase in our campaign for a vital area, the capture of which would have had far-reaching consequences. A firm grip on the situation combined with resolute direction at corps level would have tipped the scales in our favour. A determined leadership at lower levels could have done the rest to score a striking success. Both these vital ingredients were unfortunately missing. The guiding hand of the corps commander was conspicuously absent—in fact, he appeared to have hardly played a part in the battle, which even at that late stage could have laid the foundation of ultimate victory. In any event, the rot initiated by the lack of forceful direction at higher levels of command deteriorated into a dismal disaster at lower levels through atrocious execution. We came out of the battle battered and bruised, to usher in a stalemate that lasted for the rest of the conflict. It was an inexcusable command failure.

(c) The lack of rapport between GOC 6 Mountain Division and 1st Armoured Division made further contribution to the chaotic performance at Chawinda.

(d) Leadership at battalion and brigade level was lacking. There was a tendency on the part of the brigade and battalion commanders to hold themselves back, instead of going forward to dominate the situation. Thus, they had no grip over the circumstances as they developed.’

There were of course some very praiseworthy performances, especially by the armour. The Indian Armoured Division fought a successful action at Phillora. It was one of the biggest engagements of the war. The Indian armour succeeded in drawing the Pakistani armour to the ground of its own choice and then inflicted heavy losses on it. Lieutenant General Hanut Singh wrote in *The Story of Poona Horse*: ‘The conduct of 4 Horse and 17 Horse (Poona Horse) throughout the war was beyond praise. Between the two of them, they had fought both the Pakistani armoured Division to a standstill.’



Prime Minister Shastri flanked by army commanders on a Patton tank

By all measures, the progress of 1 Corps in Sialkot was needlessly cautious and undesirably slow. The 26 Infantry Division was hardly used in the war. The commander overestimated the threat on the flanks of 1st Armoured Division, which incidentally never materialised. Lack of intelligence and the fog of war further obfuscated the picture for the Indian commanders. ‘Days were wasted in deciding on the next move for every step. The result was inevitable,’ Major General Gurcharan Singh Sandhu wrote. The advantage of surprise and initiative was wasted on 8 September, and the rapier thrust degenerated into a slogging bout.

General Mohammad Musa, Pakistan’s Commander-in-Chief in the 1965 war, perhaps had the last word on India’s inept performance in the Sialkot sector. He wrote: ‘By all military logic, he (India) should have broken through our disposition and reached GT Road within a few days because of (a) the great disparity between the opposing forces, (b) the fact that his armoured division had additional and powerful infantry support whereas ours relied on its own meagre infantry resources, and (c) the terrain up to Shakargarh to the east and the GT Road to the south was ideal for armoured warfare. Despite these favourable factors, he did not even cap-

ture Chawinda, against which he struck his head day and night for nearly a fortnight.'

Clearly, due to timidity on the part of Indian higher commanders, India lost the opportunity to capture Chawinda. This was to remain one of the regrets of the war and perhaps contributed to the misconception that the 1965 war was largely a stalemate, although in terms of territory captured and tanks destroyed, India was far ahead of the Pakistanis.

Peace Moves

International Mediation

As the fighting between Indian and Pakistani forces continued, the United Nations was making efforts to broker peace between the two countries. Secretary General U Thant had earlier in the year brought about the Kutch agreement but Pakistan's blatant aggression along the CFL had not gone unnoticed. As reports of large-scale infiltration in the wake of Operation Gibraltar poured in, U Thant had issued an appeal on 1 September for both sides to take steps that would ensure peace. He pointed out: '(to) resort to force in settlement of a dispute of this kind is contrary to both the spirit and the letter of Charter of the United Nations and the obligations undertaken by India and Pakistan as members of the organisation.' He wanted India and Pakistan to take the following steps immediately:

- (a) Cessation of violation of the ceasefire line
- (b) Withdrawal of armed personnel who had occupied positions on the other side of the line
- (c) Halting of all firing across the ceasefire line

It was strange to hear the UN secretary general equate India and Pakistan and ask both of them to cease the fighting, when the UN's own observers had clearly identified Pakistan as the aggressor. Indeed, U Thant circulated a written report to members of the Security Council on 3 September based on a report by Lieutenant General RH Nimmo, head of the United Nations Military Observers Group in India and Pakistan. U Thant wrote: 'General Nimmo has indicated to me that the series of violations that began on 5 August were to a considerable extent in subsequent days in the form of armed men, generally not in uniform, crossing the ceasefire line from the Pakistan side for the purpose of armed action on the Indian side.'



Pakistan President Mohd. Ayub and Indian Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri sit across the table in Tashkent

When the UN secretary general tried to obtain assurances from both India and Pakistan to cease fighting and revert to status quo, he again had a one-sided response. As he observed in the same report: 'I have not been able to obtain from the government of Pakistan any assurance that the ceasefire and ceasefire line will be respected henceforth, or that efforts would be exerted to restore conditions to normal along the line. I did receive an assurance from the government of India, conveyed orally by their representative at the United Nations that India would act with restraint with regard to any retaliatory acts and will respect the ceasefire agreement and the ceasefire line if Pakistan does likewise.'

Yet, strangely, the debate that followed the secretary general's report as well as the resolution adopted by the UN Security Council seemed to ignore the ground reality and vital portions of the two reports sent by Lieutenant General Nimmo.

On 3 September, Prime Minister Shastri addressed the nation and gave a detailed background of Pakistan's perfidy in Kashmir. These were some of his words: 'My fellow countrymen: I speak to you tonight to acquaint you with the situation that has arisen as a result of Pakistan's aggression against us and share with you the anxieties and the responsibilities devolving on us in this critical hour...the attempt of the armed raiders who had entered Kashmir earlier to damage bridges and administrative and military centres and to commit other acts of sabotage, has largely failed...What we are up against is a regime which does not believe in freedom, democracy and peace, as we do...has any country the right to send its armed personnel to another with the avowed objective of overthrowing a democratically elected government?'

The prime minister, who was resolute and calm in the face of the developing

crisis, also asked the people to be ready for any eventuality. 'The country has to prepare itself for hard days ahead. Everyone must perform his duty fully and faithfully...the nation must get into the mood which is necessary for undergoing sufferings and making sacrifices cheerfully...this is the price of freedom which we all have to pay,' Prime Minister Shastri said. Clearly, the PM was preparing the nation for an all-out war after the setbacks at Chhamb and Jaurian.

When the Indian Army crossed the international border on 6 September, Ayub and his advisors were caught by surprise. After all, the foreign office, led by Zulfikar Bhutto, and military intelligence had assured him that India would dare not cross the international border and escalate the war. But that's precisely what India had done. Now Ayub was faced with a situation he had provoked but had not prepared adequately for.

The big powers of the time—the United States and the United Kingdom—immediately got into the act. Harold Wilson, then prime minister of the United Kingdom, sent telegrams to both Shastri and Ayub on 6 September. The tone of his letter to Shastri was resented by India, for he seemed to blame India for escalating the war. The United States put an embargo on further aid and arms supply to both India and Pakistan. The Soviet Union was keeping a close watch. It maintained the traditional stand that Jammu and Kashmir was a part of India and accepted that the disturbances in Kashmir were created by infiltrators from Pakistan. China was expected to play the card at an appropriate time and India knew it would intervene on Pakistan's behalf.

The UN Security Council met at an emergency session on 6 September and authorised the secretary general to travel to both India and Pakistan in an effort to bring about a ceasefire. The Security Council called upon India and Pakistan 'to cease hostilities in the entire area of conflict immediately, and promptly withdraw all armed personnel back to the positions held by them before 5 August 1965.'

Armed with the resolution of the Security Council, U Thant reached Rawalpindi on 9 September. The fighting was raging on all fronts. In addition to the Lahore sector, India had also launched the offensive in the Sialkot sector. After what he described as 'useful talks', the secretary general arrived in Delhi on 12 September. U Thant had an extensive discussion with Prime Minister Shastri and also his cabinet members. Shastri told him in no uncertain terms that India would not accept any military solution to the Kashmir issue. Shastri asserted that India would accept a ceasefire if Pakistan agreed to withdraw all infiltrators from the territory. U Thant could not give any such assurance and so the first round of his diplomatic visit to the subcontinent remained inconclusive.

Meanwhile, China began to put pressure on India. A note issued in Peking on 8 September was explicit: 'China cannot but pay serious attention to the Indian government's expansionist action against its neighbours and strengthen China's de-

fences and heighten her alertness along her borders. The Chinese government once solemnly warns the Indian government: India must dismantle all the aggressive military structures it has illegally built beyond or on the China–Sikkim boundary, withdraw its aggressive armed forces and stop all its acts of aggression and provocation against China in the Western, Middle and Eastern sectors of the Sino- Indian border. Otherwise India must bear responsibility for all the consequences arising there from.’

India rejected the charges. China issued another ultimatum on 16 September.

Defence Minister Chavan notes thus in his diary entry for 17 September: ‘I was woken up from sleep at 6 am to be told about the Chinese severe ultimatum to dismantle within three days the construction on Chinese territory near Sikkim border.

‘ECC (Emergency Cabinet Committee) at 9 am at prime minister’s house to consider Chinese note. Meeting lasted nearly two hours.

‘It was decided to agree to the joint inspection and send an early reply. But the general feeling was that the Chinese would not accept this proposal. It was just an excuse to start trouble for India in support of Pakistan. The main political purpose seems to be to see that Pakistan does not get weak so as to accept a ceasefire proposal under the pressure of USA and Russia militarily, to see that pressure on Pakistan is relieved, and also to give military support to Kashmir LoC.

‘Prime minister made a statement in Parliament at 3.30 pm. It was soberly received. First news of the movement of Chinese army started coming in. Tuting in Siang Division in NEFA (now Arunachal Pradesh) and Sikkim were mentioned.

‘Had a long talk with COAS about Chinese threat and our position in different places.’

The Chinese did not stop there. They kept up the pressure over the next three days by moving troops, deploying aircraft, and even firing at certain places along the border. They set a new deadline of 22 September but the Indian assessment was that China had neither the intention nor the capacity to strike against India in Pakistan’s favour, mainly because China was deeply involved in providing military assistance to Vietnam against the US intervention. In the circumstances, it was difficult for the Chinese to open a new front against India.

The Security Council, aware of the Chinese deadline, was keen that India and Pakistan accept the ceasefire proposal before the expiry of the Chinese deadline. Otherwise, it felt, China might be tempted to use its veto power in the UN Security Council. So, on 20 September, the Security Council adopted a resolution calling upon India and Pakistan to cease fire on 22 September at 0700 hours GMT (1200 hours IST). The resolution directed ‘both governments to issue orders for a ceasefire at that moment and a subsequent withdrawal of all armed personnel back to the positions held by them before August 5, 1965.’

The resolution did not satisfy either India or Pakistan. India wanted the truce on

two conditions: (a) Pakistan should be declared the aggressor, and (b) Pakistan should give an assurance that she would in no way interfere in the affairs of Kashmir. The solution, on the other hand, shattered Pakistan's hope to defeat India with Chinese support and thereby force it to agree to a plebiscite in Kashmir.

Fighting ceased on 22 September. However, Pakistan continued to hit civilian targets and made incursions even after 22 September. Through all the tense weeks, the Soviet Union, more than any other country, played a quiet, behind-the-scene role in getting Pakistan and India to end the fighting and come to the negotiating table. Soviet Premier AN Kosygin wrote four letters to Shastri and Ayub between 20 August and 17 September, and appealed for a peaceful solution to the conflict, for it was not only affecting two major Asian states but also aggravating tension in South Asia, Southeast Asia and even Soviet Union. Kosygin made it clear that in Moscow's view 'any dispute, including the questions connected with Kashmir, can best be settled by peaceful means...'

In the next few months the Soviet Union not only played an overt mediator's part but also hosted the two leaders, Shastri and Ayub, at Tashkent for a bilateral summit. This ultimately led to the Tashkent Declaration on 10 January 1966 (*see [Appendix 5](#) for the full text*), paving the way for peace, although the hawks in both countries expressed unhappiness over the outcome.

Straining at the Leash

A Role Denied

The maritime situation in the Indian Ocean in the early 1960s was in flux. Great Britain, which continued to be the predominant military power in the region was, after almost 150 years of Pax Britannica, in the process of winding down its presence and would withdraw from East of Suez in 1968. Great Britain had already acceded space to the new superpower, the United States, which was in the process of setting up bases in the region, most notably in Diego Garcia. With the full-blooded onset of the Cold War after the Suez Crisis (1956), the Berlin Crisis (1961), and the Cuban Missile Crisis (1962), two of which (Suez and Cuban missile crises) were in the maritime dimension, the Soviet Union had started arming navies in the region, most notably Egypt and Indonesia.

In India, although budget allocation to the navy after Independence in 1947 was not high, a modest force was gradually built up. India had chosen to remain a member of the British Commonwealth. As part of the 'Commonwealth's defence against the Soviet Union', Britain provided warships to India, as it did to the other members of the Commonwealth. Between 1947 and 1961, a reconditioned aircraft carrier, two reconditioned cruisers, six reconditioned destroyers, three new anti-aircraft (AA) frigates, five new anti-submarine frigates and six new minesweepers were acquired from Britain. However, after India's championship of the non-aligned movement in the mid-1950s, supply of arms from the West slowed to a trickle and only outdated platforms were on offer. On the other hand, Pakistan's membership of CENTO, which made it a NATO ally, enabled it to get modern arms with relative ease. The most notable discrimination in the maritime field was the lease of the Tench-class attack submarine, PNS *Ghazi*, by the US Navy to the Pakistani Navy in 1963. This forced India to turn to the Soviet Union for the supply of modern armaments.

The Chinese intrusion in the northern and north-eastern land borders in 1962 led to a comprehensive review of national security in 1963 to determine the pressing requirements of the army, navy and air force, based on the premise of continuing hostility from both Pakistan and China. A separate fleet, to be based at Visakhapatnam, was approved for the navy, along with a submarine arm and other ships. However, the new platforms would only be realised commencing 1967 due to the more urgent requirements of the army and the air force. To relieve army units for duty on the northern and western borders after 1962, the Indian Navy was charged with the duties of coastal defence and garrisoning of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. The latter had become critical because starting 1963 Indonesia's stance was markedly belligerent towards India. This was an unfortunate turn-

around, given the bonhomie between Pandit Nehru and Sukarno in the 1950s due to the crucial role played by India in 1948, both to secure Sukarno's personal security, through an aerial rescue operation piloted by Biju Patnaik, and to facilitate Indonesia's independence, after it was re-occupied by the Dutch in the aftermath of World War II. In fact, the Indian Air Force helped set up the Indonesian Air Force in the early 1950s and India supplied considerable armament to Indonesia during the period.

In the early 1960s, legitimately upset over the refusal of the former colonial rulers to allow Borneo, Kalimantan and West Papua to merge with Indonesia, Sukarno started gravitating towards the Communist bloc. The Soviet Union started the buildup of the Indonesian Navy in 1958 with the supply of advanced ships and submarines, and by 1964 the Indonesian Navy was a formidable force. Indonesian leaders started voicing claims to Great Nicobar Island, which was closest to Sumatra, and there was an increase in the sightings of unidentified submarines and aircraft in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Responsibility for the security of the islands was a major factor in the minds of the Indian Navy, especially as Indonesia had dispatched a few naval units to Karachi to bolster the Pakistani Navy in 1965. It was this vulnerability in July–August 1965 that impelled naval headquarters to keep the Indian fleet in the Bay of Bengal for as long as possible, so as to deter adventurist Indonesian naval moves.

As is now well known, Pakistan launched Operation Desert Hawk in March–April 1965. This was a probing encounter in the Rann of Kutch, where the land boundary had not been finalised. In early 1965, the Indian fleet – with Rear Admiral BA Samson, flag officer commanding Indian fleet (FOCIF), flying his flag on INS *Vikrant* – made a routine deployment to the Persian Gulf. Thereafter the fleet was deployed off Kutch, along with its escorts, for Exercise Arrowhead with the Indian Army, where the local army formations familiarised themselves with naval aircraft flown from the carrier, with the aim of these being utilised to support army operations in a possible conflict. This was especially important as the Pakistanis had a major airfield at Badin, just 30 km from Kutch. A number of firing exercises by naval ships and aircraft was carried out; the fleet also provided logistics support to the army troops due to poor road communications in the area. This show of force alarmed the Pakistanis. INS *Vikrant* then sailed to Bombay for a scheduled refit.

Renewed tensions and border intrusions in April 1965 saw the Indian armed forces being put on alert on 26 April, in response to a general mobilisation ordered in Pakistan. *Vikrant's* refit was postponed and she sailed out to embark her aircraft once again for a possible conflict. However, following an intervention by Prime Minister Harold Wilson on 28 April, ceasefire negotiations began in early May and ceasefire was finally declared on 30 June, after which *Vikrant* entered refit to undertake much-needed repairs. This resulted in *Vikrant* being unavailable for opera-

tions in September 1965 when full-scale war finally broke out. This absence was a critical shortfall and highlighted the limitations of having a single aircraft carrier with the navy.

Apart from *Vikrant*, at least half a dozen of the 18 Indian ships were due for refit in the monsoon of 1965. This was pretty much the norm, as the rough seas during the monsoon precluded extensive maritime operations and a larger part of the fleet was scheduled for maintenance. The ceasefire on 30 June reinforced the thought that the monsoon period would provide some much-needed respite to the fleet, which had been away from base port since January 1965. Unfortunately, this proved to be wrong.

Leaving ships under refit at the Naval Dockyard at Bombay, the Indian fleet comprising *Mysore* (flagship), *Brahmaputra*, *Beas*, *Khukri*, *Kirpan*, *Kuthar* and *Ranjit* sailed for the Bay of Bengal in end-June 1965 for the dual purpose of anti-submarine exercises and patrols off the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Since the Indian Navy did not have its own submarine, while Pakistan had already acquired PNS *Ghazi*, it had arranged for a British submarine, HMS *Astute*, to be available off Madras in July for anti-submarine training, after which it was planned that ships of the fleet would deploy off Andaman and Nicobar Islands, followed by port calls at Calcutta (after patrols off East Pakistan) and Visakhapatnam. Accordingly, *Mysore*, *Brahmaputra* and *Beas*, after completion of the exercise off Madras, were deployed in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands in August 1965, while the remaining four ships remained off Madras to continue the anti-submarine exercises (see [map 14](#)).

When Pakistan launched Operation Gibraltar on 5 August 1965, and a large number of armed infiltrators crossed the ceasefire line in Kashmir, the situation for the navy had become quite vexed. With most of the operational ships of the Indian fleet away in the east, the resources available in Bombay were meagre. In spite of continued efforts made by India to ensure peace, the situation soon aggravated and the Indian Army had to take preventive measures in Kashmir to plug the entry points of the infiltrators. Since Pakistan was likely to extend the war to the Arabian Sea as well, Karachi being its main naval base, the Indian Navy decided to initiate necessary actions to prepare the fleet for the probable war. Operation Gondola, which authorised FOCIF to deploy ships for the protection of ports on the west coast, was ordered by naval HQ on 13 August. This operation was given actual effect on 1 September. The frigate *Talwar*, which had been carrying out essential maintenance, was hurriedly boxed up and sent for investigating the presence of possible enemy vessels in the Kori Creek, a few miles southwest of the Indo-Pakistan border in the Gulf of Kutch. Her first patrol was for five days from 12 to 16 August, and then again from 24 to 28 August. It did not come across any Pakistani ship, and neither did it see any suspicious activity.



Indian naval officers aboard a battleship

Meanwhile, the FOCIF Rear Admiral Samson, aware of the increasing tension in Kashmir, asked the Navy Chief Vice Admiral BS Soman on 10 August whether he should return with the fleet to Bombay. He was told that the fleet should adhere to its programme. There was a reason why Admiral Soman ordered the fleet to stay in the east. He has recalled the details of the constraint placed on the navy and what he did about it in *Blueprint to Bluewater: The Indian Navy 1951-65*, Rear Admiral (retd) Satyendra Singh's book on the history of the Indian Navy:

One morning, I received a file signed by HC Sarin (then secretary, defence production), ICS, saying, 'The navy is not to operate north of the latitude of Porbandar, and is also not to take or initiate offensive action at sea against Pakistan unless forced to do so by offensive action by the Pak forces.' If I remember correctly, both the Defence Secretary Shri PVR Rao, ICS, and the Defence Minister Shri YB Chavan were out of Delhi at that time. I rang up Sarin and told him that I could not accept that order and was seeing the defence minister as soon as he returned, which was the very next day.

When I saw Chavan, he said he was sorry that even after the Chinese debacle in 1962 the navy had continued to be overlooked, and as such it would perhaps be better if the navy did not go looking for trouble. I said that while I was most grateful to him for having appreciated that we were at that time the stepchild of the government, non-participation by us in an aggressive manner in this war would not only adversely affect the morale of the service, but also the navy's image in the public would go down the drain. He mentioned the fact of the aircraft carrier being in the dock and the responsibilities assigned to the navy for the defence of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands from a possible and probable attack from Indonesia which, in the government's order of priorities, was more crucial than naval operations against Pakistan.

I assured him that I was fully aware of these implications of the navy's operations and responsibilities. INS Mysore had already been deployed in that area and all that I was asking for was to leave the navy to plan and do what it can in an active manner instead of remaining passive. Finally the defence minister said that even Prime Minister Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri did not want the conflict to escalate at sea and that was that. I requested him for permission to see the prime minister so that I could convince him of what I felt strongly about and he readily agreed.

When I called on the prime minister, he brought up the same two points – the navy had not been strengthened since the Sino-Indian conflict and its responsibilities in the Andaman and Nicobar area were more important than in the Arabian Sea. I told him that it was wrong in principle to tie down one arm of the defence services to passive action in a war situation. It should have the freedom to act offensively so long as it did not bite off more than it could chew. When he brought up the question of the undesirability of any escalation of the war at sea, I reminded him of what happened to Germany on a few occasions in the two World Wars when they kept their fleets bottled up. I added that I was sure that had they used their navy fully, from the start of the wars, the history of the world would have been different, however much the rest of the world disliked this possibility. On this he seemed to be annoyed and told me, 'You have no choice.' I then asked him whether he had any objection to my seeing the supreme commander of the armed forces, meaning the president. He smiled and politely said, 'No, you do not have to see him.' In the absence of government directives, in end-August 1965, after completing their deployment in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Mysore, Brahmaputra and Beas proceeded to Calcutta, while the second group of ships Khukri, Kirpan, Kuthar and Ranjit continued exercising with the British submarine off Madras. The Indian fleet was finally recalled to the west coast when the Pakistani Army crossed the international border on 1 September 1965 as part of Operation Grand Slam, and

advanced towards Akhnoor. On that day, the disposition of the navy's forces was as follows: Mysore, Ranjit, Khukri, Kuthar and Kirpan were at Visakhapatnam; Brahmaputra and Beas were at Calcutta; Talwar was on patrol off Kori Creek; Rajput, Kistna, Sutlej, Darshak and Shakti were at Bombay; Godavari and Gomti were at Cochin; two minesweepers, Cannanore and Kakinada, were at Goa; and Vikrant, Trishul, Betwa and Rana were at Bombay for scheduled refits. The Seahawk and Alize aircraft squadrons, which had disembarked Vikrant for the duration of her refit, were distributed between Jamnagar and Bombay. IAF Liberator aircraft were available for maritime reconnaissance, a role later taken over by the navy.

LK Jha, who was principal secretary to the prime minister, also remembers what the navy felt at that time:

When the conflict started in the Jammu area of Kashmir and their tanks came into our territory, whereas our own tanks could not easily go because the bridges were not strong enough, there was a real dilemma. Air Marshal Arjan Singh and General Chaudhuri were present at a meeting to discuss things; there we all turned to Arjan and asked him whether he could take on the Pakistani tanks from the air. Now there was a great deal of hesitation, again on the basic policy of keeping the conflict as narrow-based as possible and in not involving the air force. Whether or not to bring in the air force was a crucial matter but there seemed to be no other alternative. Arjan agreed to take the Pakistani tanks on at very short notice, without any prior preparation and even in the late afternoon.

It was still being thought of as a local battle. But we realised that the terrain where we were fighting was one where we were much more vulnerable and communication depended on a couple of bridges – if they were blown up, we would be completely cut off. And therefore the thought turned to using the plan that had been earlier evolved for marching into Lahore. But even then it was a very firm decision that we would not allow things to escalate into a full-scale war – I mean war in the legal sense – between India and Pakistan.

Admiral Soman had in the meantime – ever since the involvement of the air force – been straining at the leash, saying 'look, let me go into action'. But again the same consideration that was acting as a restraint – on using the air force or going into Lahore – prevailed. It was felt that if we now opened up another front off Karachi, it would become a major engagement and would no longer be a matter of localised conflict. So, the decision was taken that the operation to march into Lahore would be launched but that the navy would not be involved.

The Indian Army crossed the international border at Wagah on the morning of 6 September and headed for Lahore. President Ayub went on air. It was

a very, very strong and angry broadcast. Admiral Soman thought that the opening of the Lahore front meant that a no-holds-barred situation had come, and he, I think, issued a signal that we were at war with Pakistan. This signal had to be countermanded, because we did not want to go to that stage so soon. But we realised that the navy had the capability and if the events so necessitated, I don't think there would have been too long a hesitation to use it. But the feeling was strong that if we could contain the Pakistani forces and hold them on land, then perhaps it would be wiser not to get the navy involved. I knew that the navy was not happy with this decision because they were very anxious to go into action.

Despite the government directive for a largely defensive role, the Indian Navy had chalked out a contingency plan. Intelligence on the disposition of the Pakistani naval forces had indicated that PNS *Ghazi* had sailed on 2–3 September with the Pakistani fleet. While the fleet returned to harbour the same evening, *Ghazi* did not, and it was likely to have been deployed off Bombay for anti-shipping operations. On 5 September, FOCIF was given permission to seek and destroy *Ghazi*, if detected on passage. An earlier directive had permitted Indian Navy ships to attack the submarine only if detected in Indian territorial waters. According to the navy's assessment, the perceived threat from the Pakistani Navy was likely to be:

- Raids by Pakistani surface ships on Indian ports and Indian merchant vessels. Possible sporadic raids by the Indonesian Navy on the Nicobar group of islands
- Possible attacks by PNS *Ghazi* on Indian warships. The Indian Navy envisaged its role to be relating to the maritime defence of the western and eastern coasts and the island territories. The tasks envisaged were: first, to carry out sweeps off the west coast of Pakistan to disrupt the Port of Karachi and inflict heavy damage on port installations; next, the destruction of Pakistan's naval forces if ordered; third, provision of general support for the defence of the major ports on the west coast; and fourth, the provision of general cover and protection to Indian merchant ships in the Arabian Sea, especially those plying to and from the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea. It may be remembered that at that time India's trade was largely borne on-board 250 Indian flagged merchant ships – in contrast, only 30 merchant ships belonged to Pakistan and most of their goods was carried on neutral bottoms.

Meanwhile, the navy's Seahawk aircraft, which had moved to Jamnagar on 1 September for armament workup, were placed under the operational control of the Western Air Command on 3 September. They were tasked to prepare for an air strike on the radar installation at the nearest Pakistan Air Force station at Badin. On 5 September, the Seahawks came to an immediate state of readiness and the

strike on the Badin radar installation was scheduled to be launched at dawn on 7 September. All other Indian Naval Air Squadrons – INAS 310 (Alize anti-submarine aircraft squadron), INAS 550 (Seahawk and Alize trainer squadron), and INAS 551 (Kiran jet trainer squadron) – were deployed for reconnaissance and anti-shiping roles and for the air defence of Indian seaports.

On 6 September, when the Indian Army crossed the international border and advanced towards Lahore, the Pakistan Air Force attacked Indian airfields. On the evening of 6 September, the Indian Air Force station at Jamnagar was bombed by Pakistani B-57 Canberra bombers. Bombing continued throughout the night. IAF aircraft, the air traffic control tower and the runway were damaged. The Seahawks were lucky – they escaped damage. On 7 September, the strike on Badin was cancelled and all the Seahawks were withdrawn from Jamnagar to Bombay. The air defence of Bombay, which was an air force commitment, was entrusted to the navy's Seahawks because the air force had become fully committed in the air battles in the north.

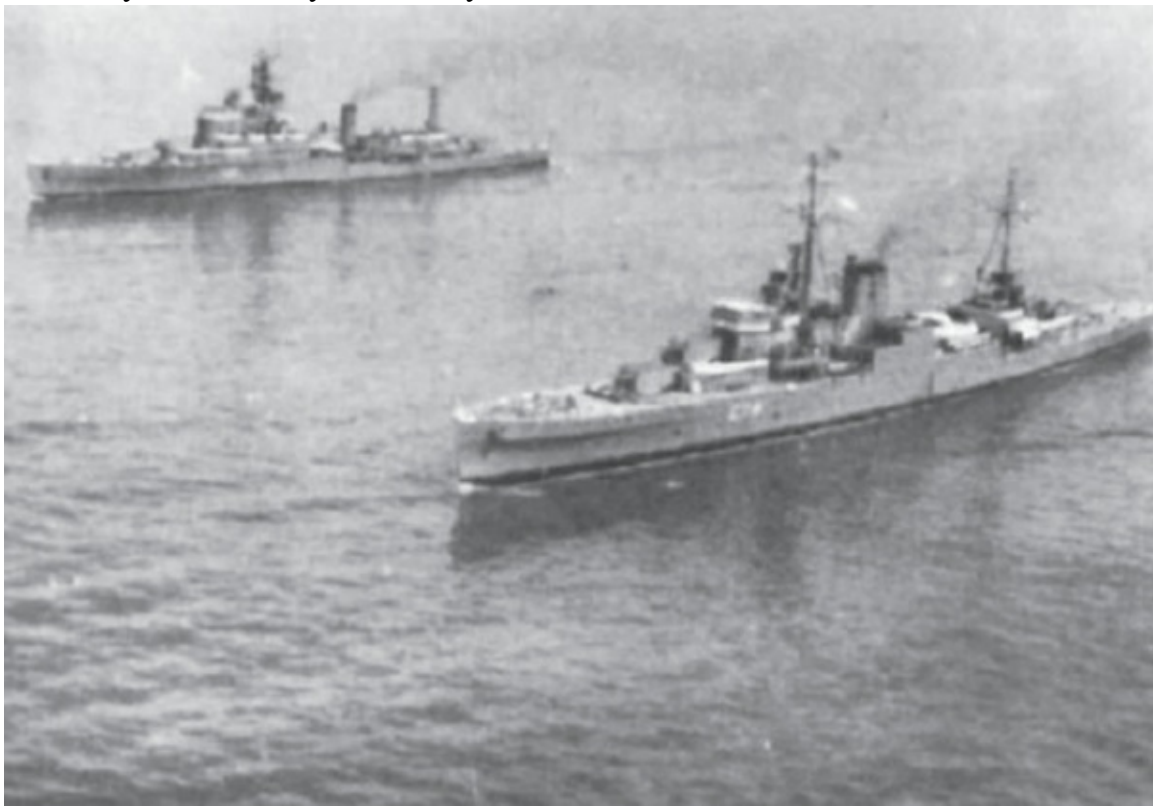
The FOCIF and major units of the Indian fleet (*Mysore*, *Khukri*, *Kuthar* and *Ranjit*) arrived back in Bombay on the morning of 7 September. However, they got breathing space of just a few hours, as naval headquarters were informed of the likelihood of a naval raid on Bombay that night. The FOCIF, embarked on *Mysore*, along with *Rajput*, *Ranjit* and *Betwa* sailed the same evening for a defensive patrol off Mumbai. Alizes were also employed for aerial patrols off Bombay.

However, the raid happened elsewhere. The very same night, the Pakistani flotilla, disguised as merchant ships, bombarded Dwarka with about 125 shells in a sneak attack, resulting in minor damage to a railway restroom and a railway track. The navy, meanwhile, was itching for action. The higher levels were, however, grappling with the problem of how to bring the Pakistani flotilla to action without violating the spirit of the government's directives. On 7 September, the naval headquarters issued Operation Directive Rebound II, which directed the fleet to undertake offensive operations 'as dictated by circumstances'.

Operations of the Indian fleet (see [map 15](#)) were led by the flagship INS *Mysore* – a sleek cruiser powered by an 80,000 shaft horsepower steam plant and good command-and-control facilities. *Mysore*'s nine six-inch guns, controlled by fire control equipment, could deliver two and a half tonnes of explosives a minute on the target. *Mysore* also had eight four-inch guns for surface and anti-aircraft operations and twelve 40 mm Bofors AA guns. A veteran of World War II, the latter's punch and looks were legendary and she was popularly referred to as the 'Queen of the Orient'. Flying the flag of Rear Admiral BA Samson, *Mysore* sailed for offensive patrols on the west coast, accompanied by *Brahmaputra*, *Beas*, *Betwa*, *Khukri*, *Kirpan*, *Kuthar*, *Talwar*, *Rana*, *Rajput*, *Ranjit* and *Ganga*. The fleet carried out intensive patrols and sweeps in the Arabian Sea, in conjunction with the

navy's aircraft, throughout the duration of the war. On one occasion, the navy's Alize aircraft sighted two Pakistani ships 60 miles off India's west coast. The ships of the Indian fleet at once pursued the enemy, who without giving battle scurried back to Karachi. In fact, for most of the duration of the war, the Pakistani Navy was ensconced in Karachi, seeking safety behind heavy shore defences.

The Indian Navy's anti-submarine task force was keeping constant vigil and was particularly searching for the Pakistani submarine *Ghazi*, which was known to have closed to within 12 miles off Bombay harbour. On two occasions, INS *Kuthar*, under Commander DS Paintal, detected an underwater sonar contact of a possible submarine and launched attacks with full salvos from her anti-submarine mortars. The hide-and-seek went on for five continuous days and *Ghazi* was kept under continuous pressure by the Indian Navy's ships and aircraft, the final attack on her being launched on 23 September, shortly before the declaration of ceasefire. Because of this relentless anti-submarine action, *Ghazi* could not make any impact on the war. Interestingly, on the eve of the ceasefire on 23 September, a false statement broadcast by Pakistan Radio claimed that INS *Brahmaputra* had been sunk in the Arabian Sea by PNS *Ghazi*, which actually corroborated the action by *Kuthar*. After the war, the Indian Navy invited the world press and naval attachés of all countries accredited to India to have a cup of tea on board *Brahmaputra* at the Naval Dockyard, Bombay, hosted by FOCIF Rear Admiral BA Samson.



Indian Navy ships in the Arabian Sea



A senior navy officer at the front

There were two aspects of the higher direction of war in 1965 which created confusion. The first was the government's genuine belief that in modern warfare it was meaningful to engage in warlike activity without formally declaring war. The second was that once the government had decided to counter the hostile acts by Pakistan, it was reasonable that activity be selectively confined to only one or two of the armed forces. As regards the first aspect, the extracts quoted above from the recollections of Navy Chief Vice Admiral BS Soman and principal secretary LK Jha make it clear that the government was determined not to enlarge the scope of the conflict beyond the minimum required to safeguard its position in Kashmir and to prevent any escalation of the conflict beyond this objective.

After the 1965 operations, Admiral Soman, addressing the senior officers of the navy during the Commanders' Conference in November 1965, said:

Notwithstanding our initial disadvantage of the location of the fleet on the east coast at the time of the commencement of the undeclared war, and the material limitations of the ships after three months of exercises away from base, the fleet, with the help of the valiant efforts of the dockyard, took the initiative to seek the enemy and bring him to battle. Although this was not achieved, I am sure it had placed itself in a position to contain the enemy in his waters if he had ventured out, which I know was all that was expected of the fleet.

It is indeed a great pity that the role assigned to the navy was mainly a de-

fensive one. History has proved over and over again that at sea, more than perhaps on land and in the air, offence is the best form of defence. In the days of old, when there was no wireless communication, Nelsons could put their telescopes to their blind eyes and get away with it as heroes on top of their respective columns. It indeed took courage to put the telescope to the blind eye and win laurels. But it takes equal, if not greater, courage (perhaps of a different kind) to play the tethered role and curb the offensive spirit of a fighting force in the greater national interest as claimed by the authorities.

The implications of a war at sea did not seem to have been fully understood in the government agencies at many levels, but when some of these agencies talked glibly of blockade, contraband control, seizing enemy merchant ships and attacking enemy warships at sea and their ports without a proper formal declaration of war, one wondered whether they realised that any such action on the high seas without the declaration of war was liable to be branded as piracy, especially if any neutral ships became involved.

As can be seen from the foregoing reconstruction of events, the navy took all offensive measures that were feasible within the constraints placed on it. Ships were directed to hunt and destroy Pakistani ships and submarines whenever and wherever they were detected. The Seahawk aircraft, which coincidentally arrived in Jamnagar on 1 September for its annual armament workup, were specifically tasked to put out of action the high-power radar installation at Badin in Pakistan, which was only 135 nautical miles away from Jamnagar. Events precluded this operation but the offensive spirit was there. The Indian fleet and its aircraft, because of the restriction of not operating north of Porbandar, stayed as close as feasible to the limiting latitude in the hope that contact would be made with the Pakistani flotilla. When this did not happen, FOCIF had no hesitation on the subsequent nights, of proceeding northwards whenever he thought he might catch the enemy.

Given the government's determination to limit the scope of the conflict as much as possible (and the resultant restrictions of 'no offensive operations' and "do not proceed north of Porbandar"), given the army chief's desire of not giving Pakistan any inkling of their plans (and hence not agreeing to the fleet being brought back to Bombay earlier), and given the ambiguities that arise when there is no formal declaration of war (trade warfare and contraband control when neutral ships get involved), it is difficult to see what more the navy could have done.

Post-War Naval Reactions

That the government was aware of the navy's frustration at having been restricted to defensive operations can be discerned from the letter written to the navy by the then Defence Minister YB Chavan:

I greatly appreciated the silent but efficient role which the navy played in the defence of the country. The navy protected islands that were vital to our se-

curity, guarded our ports and the long Indian coastline. All merchant ships destined for our ports reached safely and our international trade was not permitted to be interfered with by the Pakistani Navy. I take this opportunity to emphasise again that the navy has done and achieved all that the government desired of it, within the bounds and compass allotted to it.

Within the navy, there were two distinct reactions. One was to decry the Pakistani Navy's raid on Dwarka. The other was a determination not to be humiliated again. In the prologue to his book *We Dared*, Admiral SN Kohli states:

During the 1965 war between India and Pakistan, the main task force of the Pakistani Navy, including the cruiser Babur, sneaked out of Karachi harbour in the dead of night and made its way to holy Dwarka, which it proceeded to bombard. The bombardment lasted half an hour or so. PNS Babur fired several six-inch shells and then the Pakistani ships withdrew to the safety of their heavily defended harbour of Karachi, well before the Indian Navy could intercept or even contact them. It is obvious that a sneak raid of this type can be undertaken by any force anywhere, to convey an impression to their government and their countrymen that they are supreme and unchallenged on the seas and that the enemy territory is at their mercy. The Pakistani naval raid on Dwarka left the officers and men of the Indian Navy infuriated and somewhat humiliated. This was particularly true of the senior echelons of our navy on whom devolved the responsibility for the maritime defence of India. I was then the deputy chief of naval staff (now vice chief of naval staff) and I vowed to myself that if ever there was another round involving naval forces and I was in any kind of position of responsibility, I would go to the farthest extremes to teach the enemy a lesson and to avenge this dastardly act. This opportunity was to come in 1971 when I was flag officer commanding-in-chief, Western Naval Command, in Bombay.'

So, even as the Indian Navy was left out of the action in 1965, it redeemed its honour in 1971 in a spectacular fashion.

Map Legend

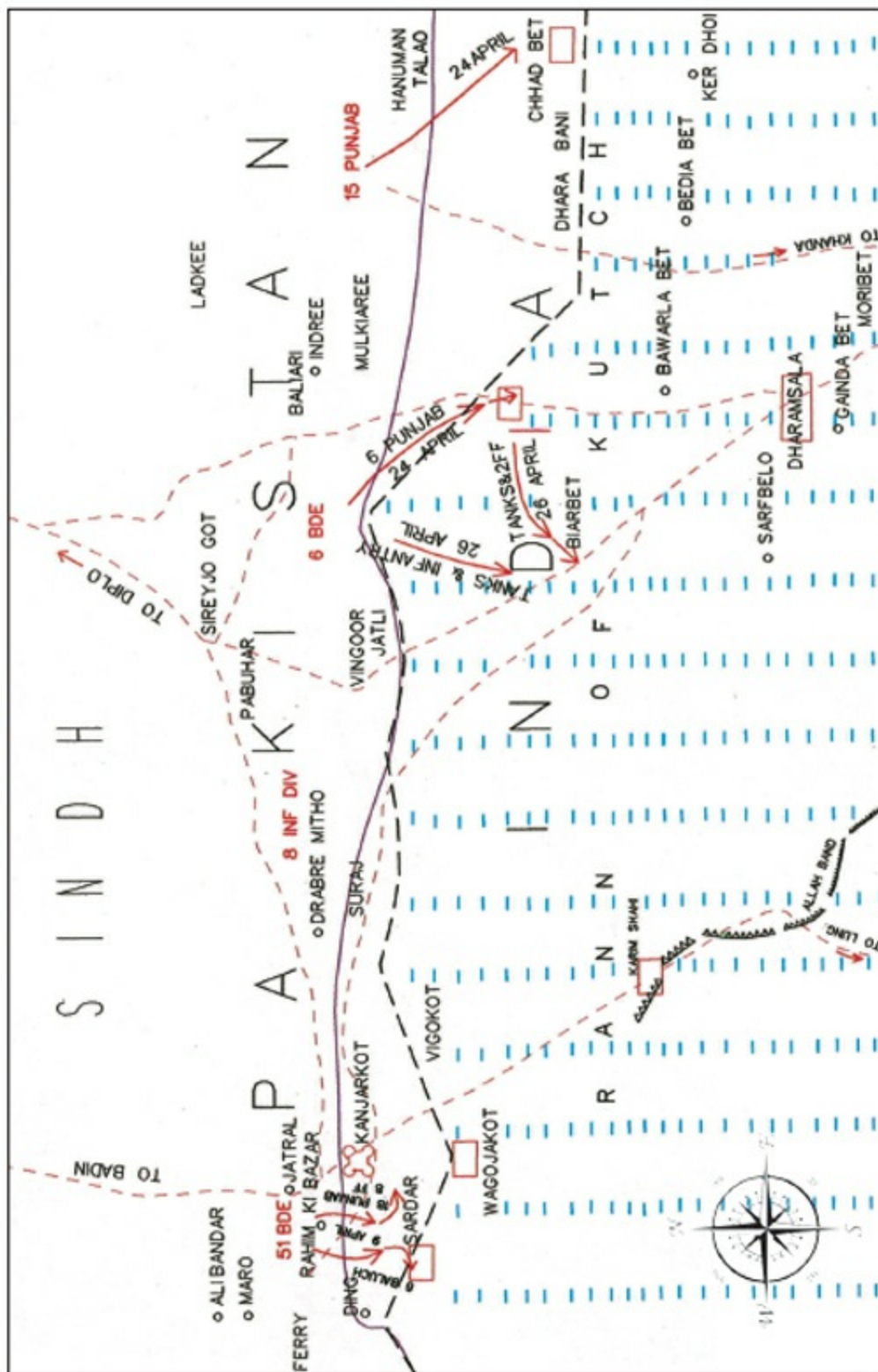
	Areas occupied by India
	Areas occupied by Pakistan
	Award line
	Armour squadron
	Artillery battery
	Infantry battalion
	Infantry brigade
	Cease Fire Line (CFL)
	Infantry company
	Indian claim line
	Indian thrust (Blue)
	Infiltration routes (Red)
	International Boundary
	International Boundary (Approximate)
	Pak thrust (Red)
	Roads
	Tracks
	Rivers
	Drain
	Canal
	Railway tracks
	Railway tracks

1. Rann of Kutch



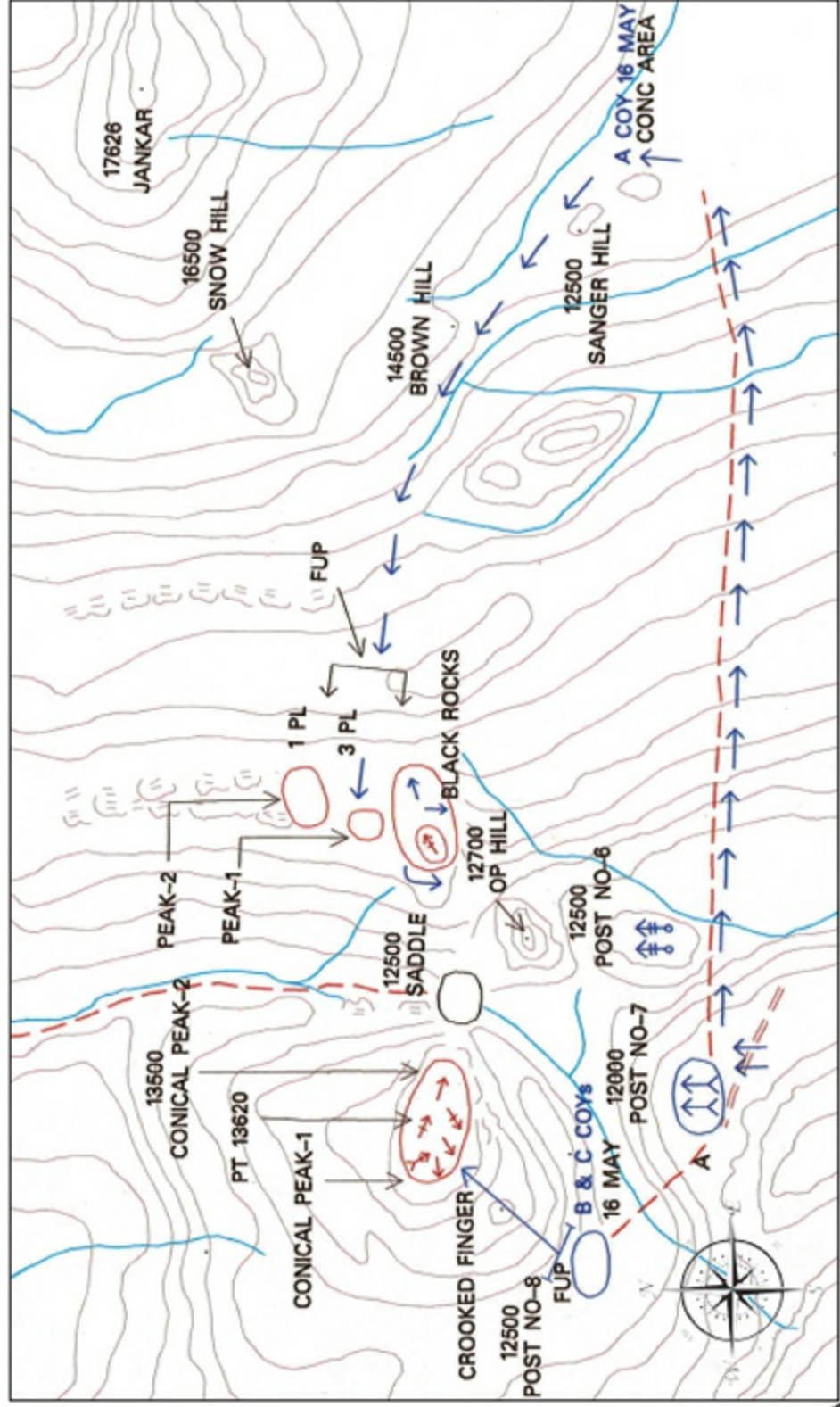
2. Pakistan attacks in Kutch

April 1965

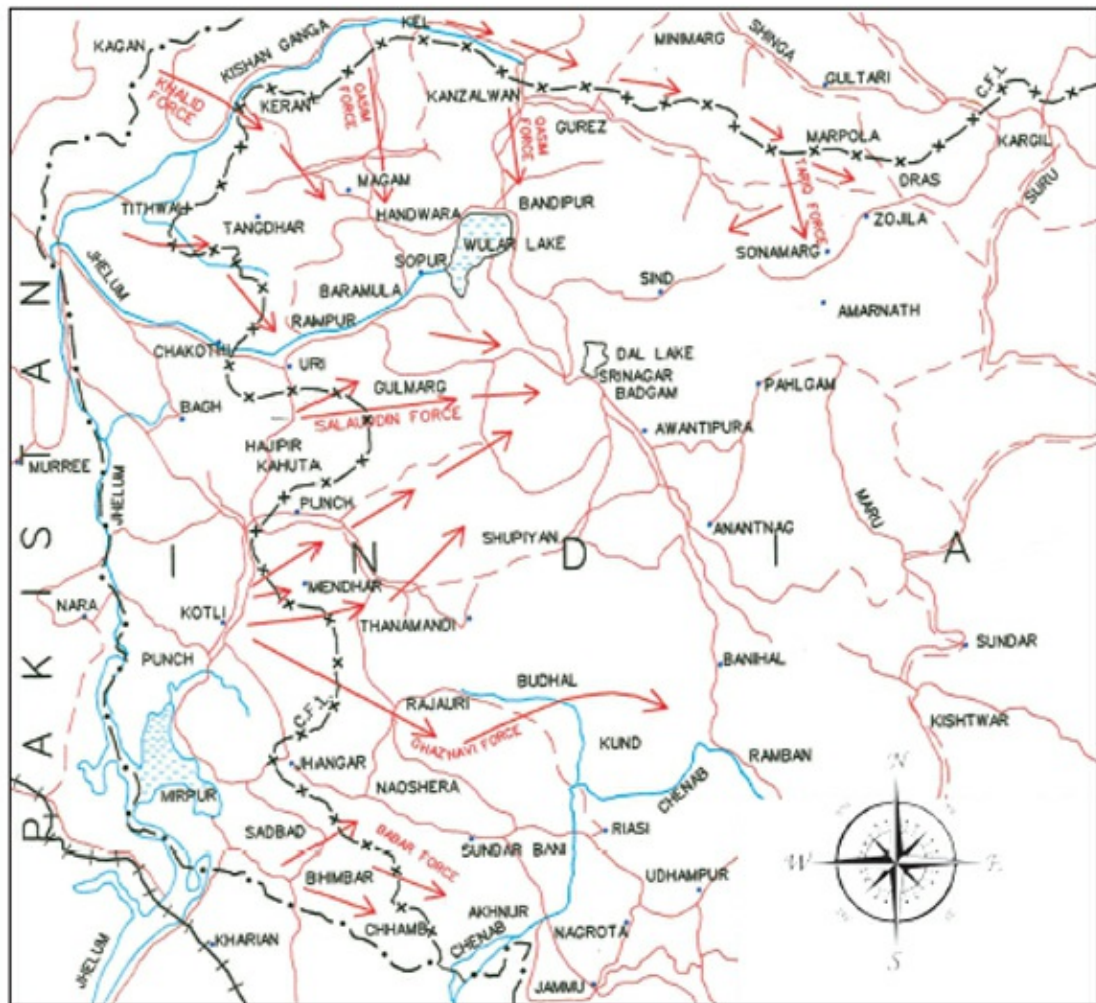


3. Capture of Point 13620 and Black Rocks – 4 Rajput Regiment

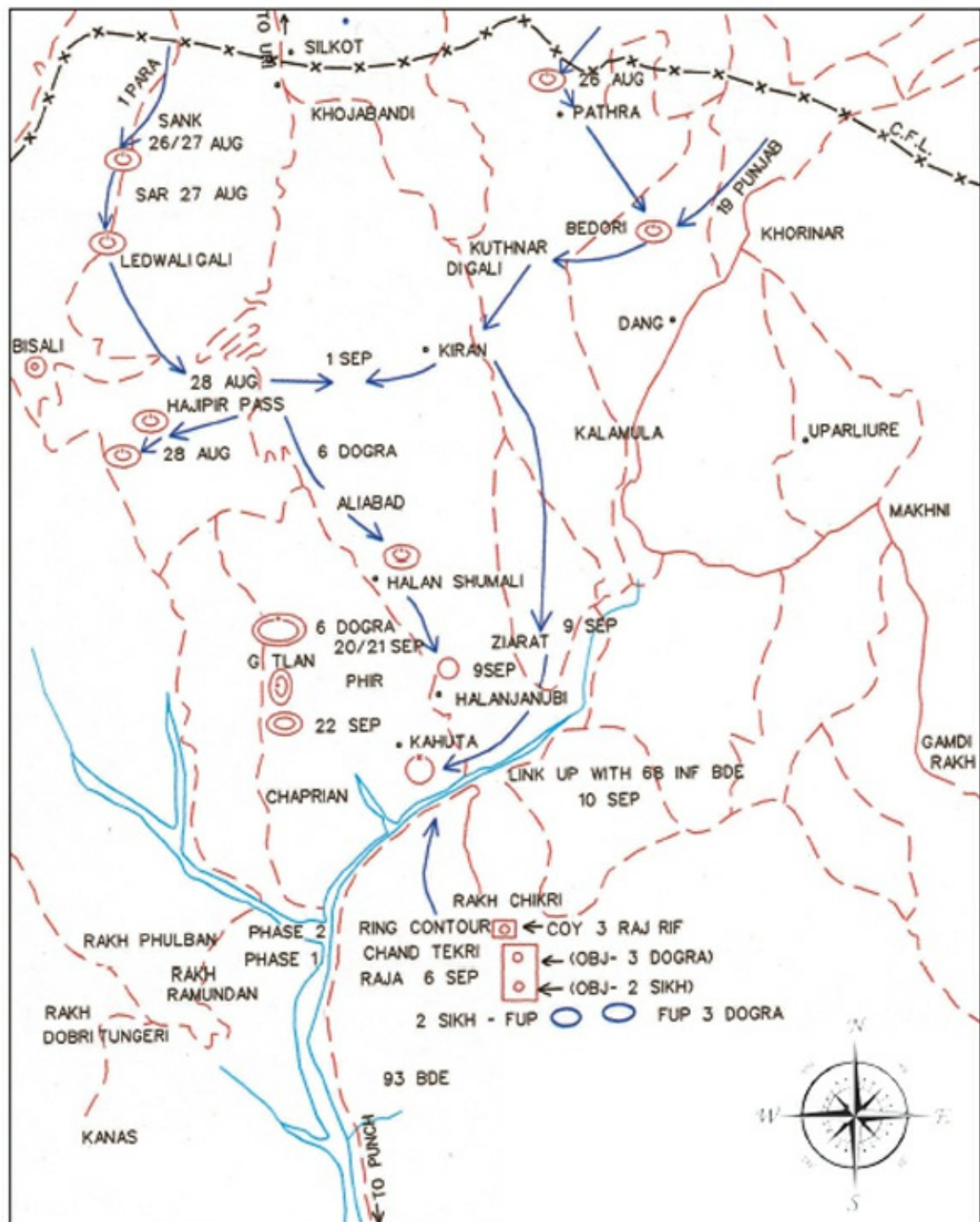
16-17 May 1965



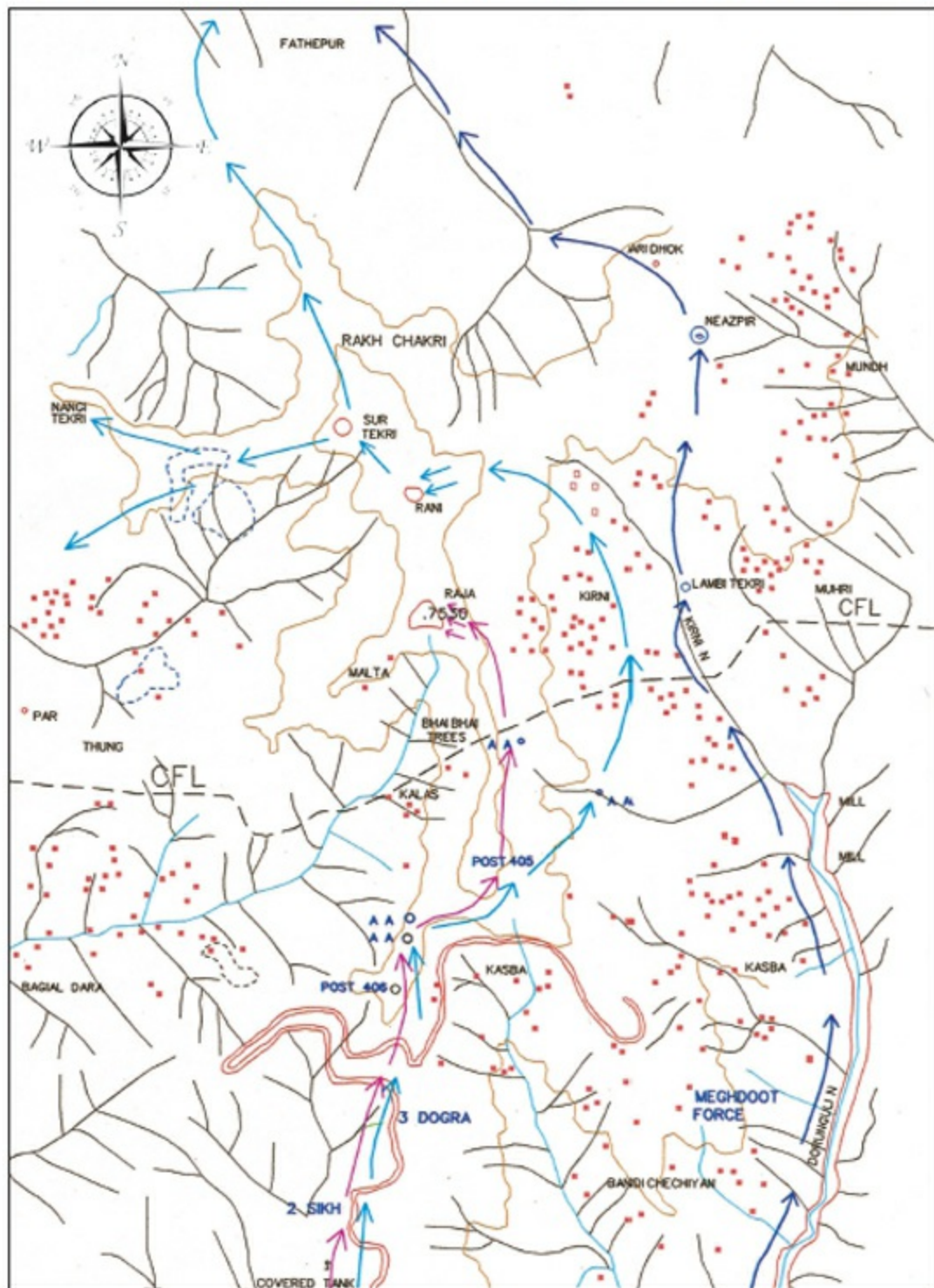
4. Operation Gibraltar: Pakistan Infiltration in J&K August 1965



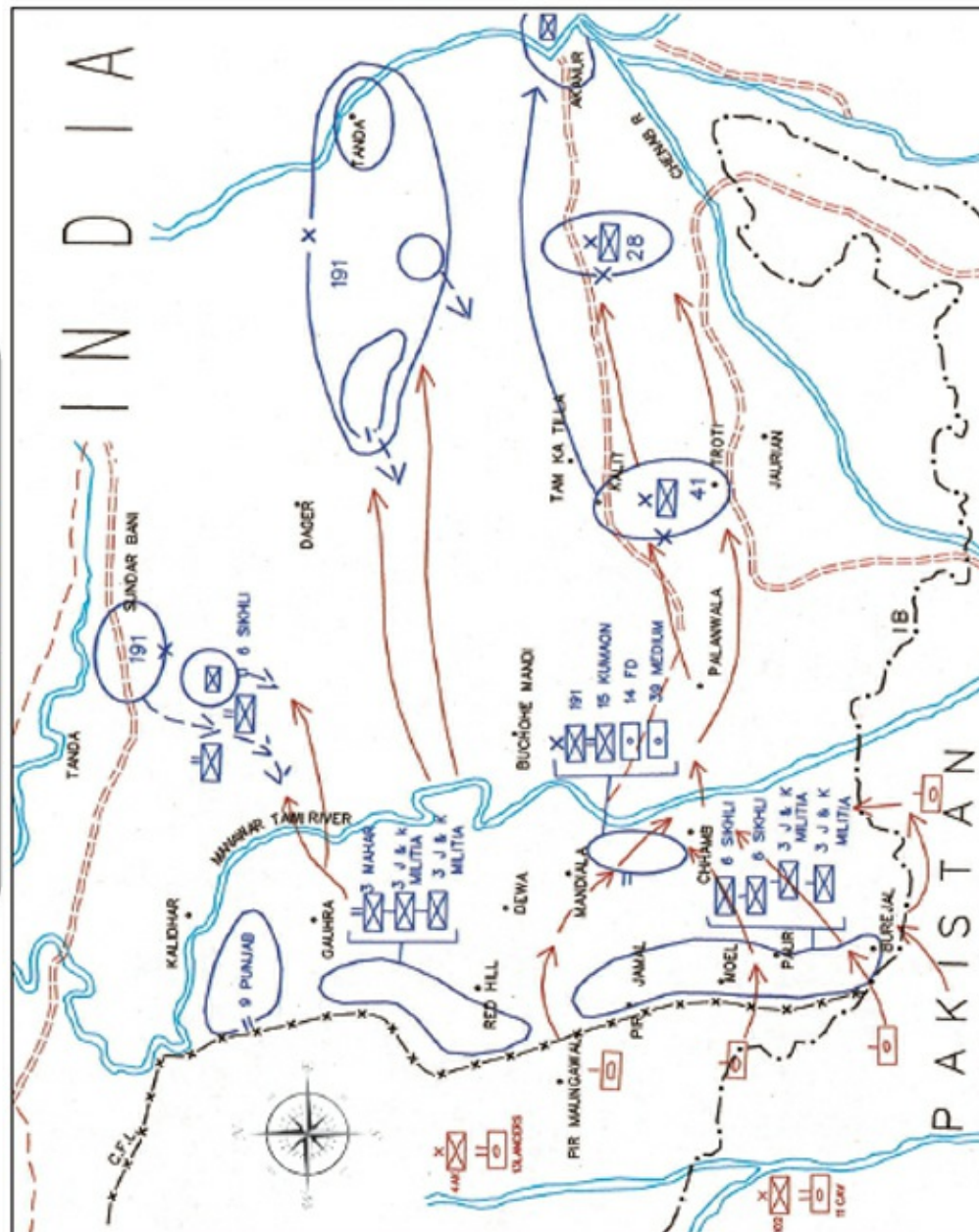
5. Operation Bakshi: Haji Pir



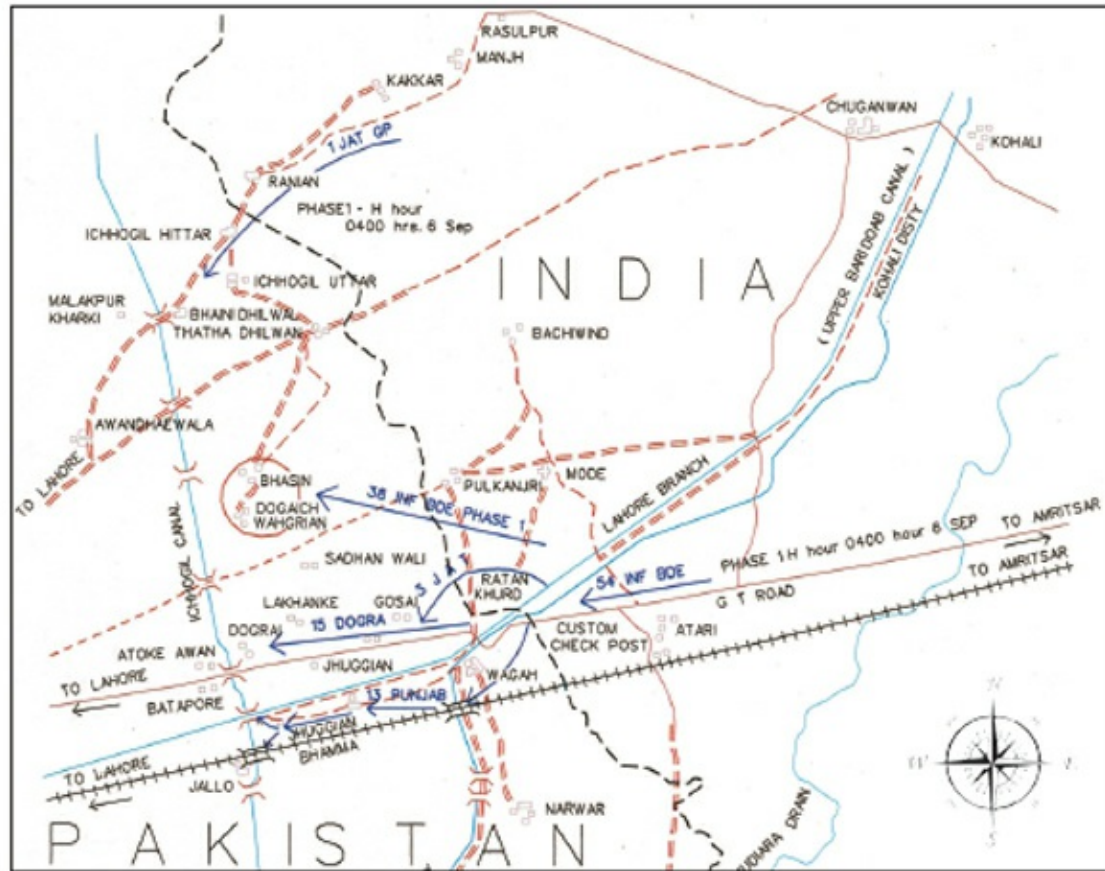
6. Operation Faulad: 93 Brigade attack on Raja and Rani



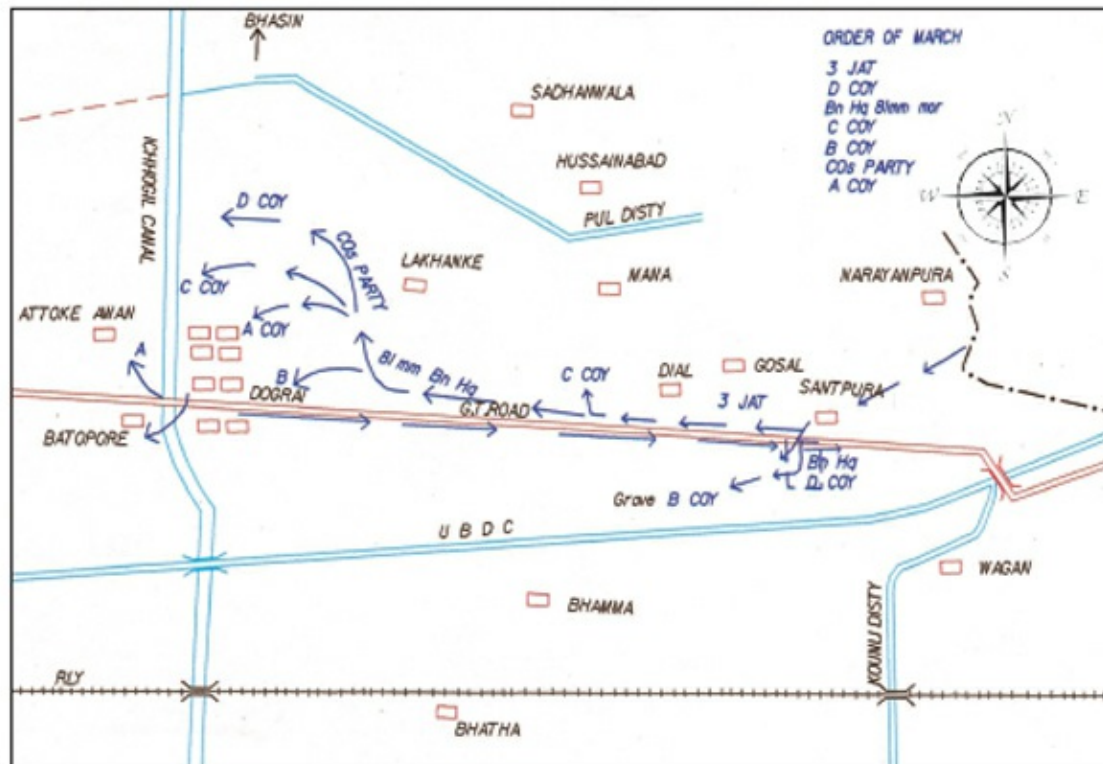
7. Battle of Chhamb-Jaurian 1-10 September 1965



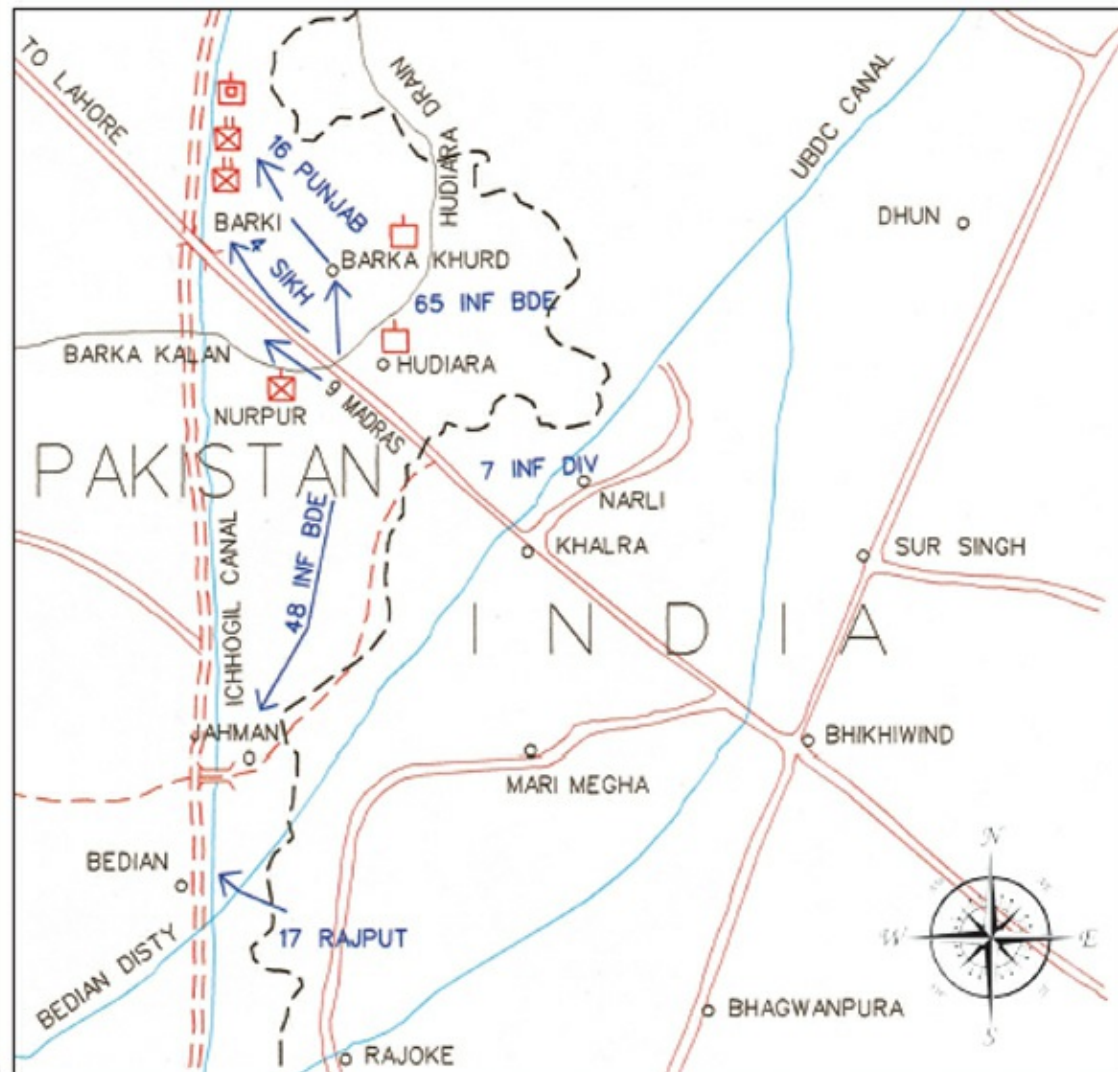
8. 15 Infantry Division Plan 6 September 1965



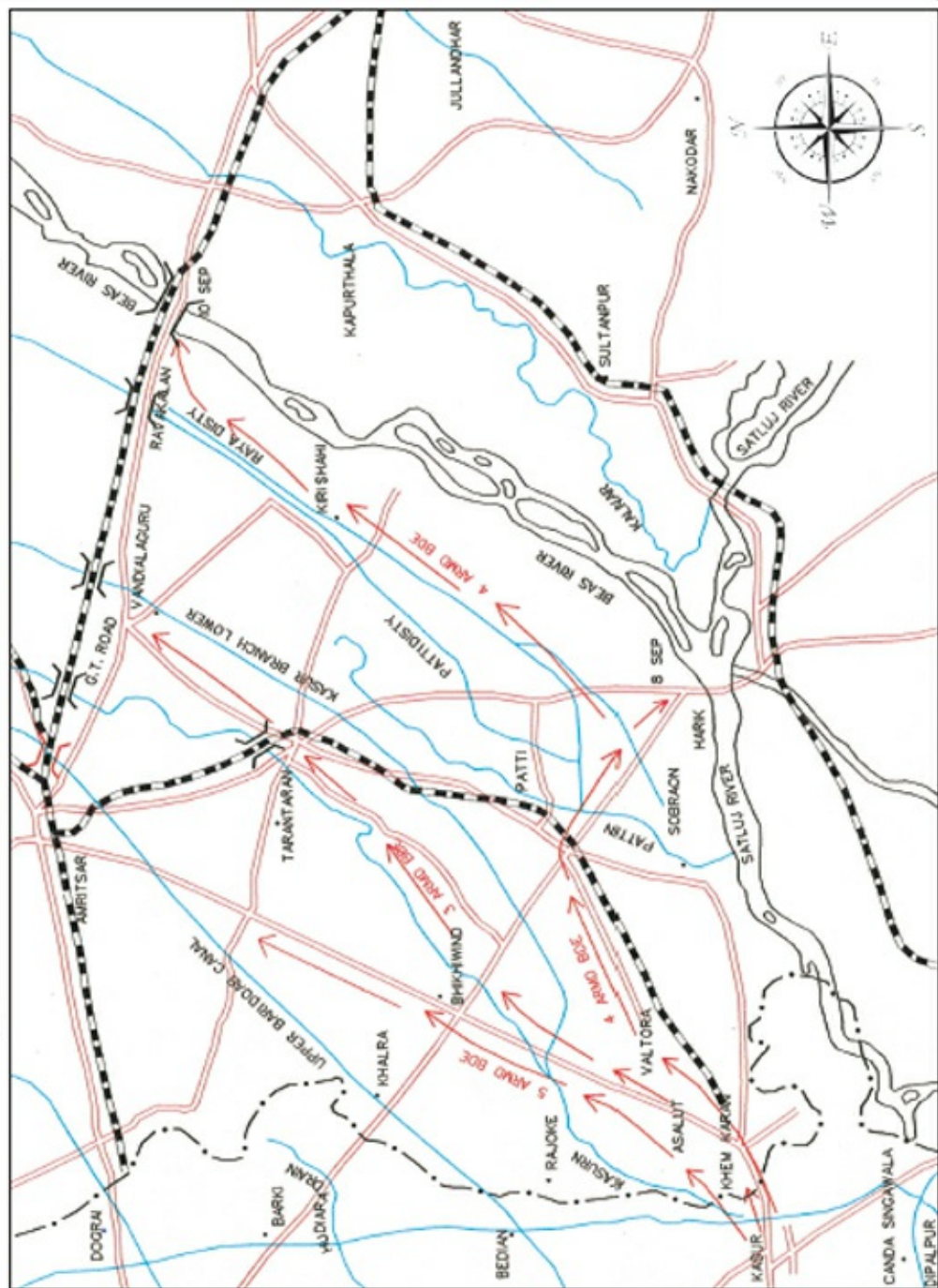
9. 54 Infantry Brigade (3 Jat) 6 September 1965



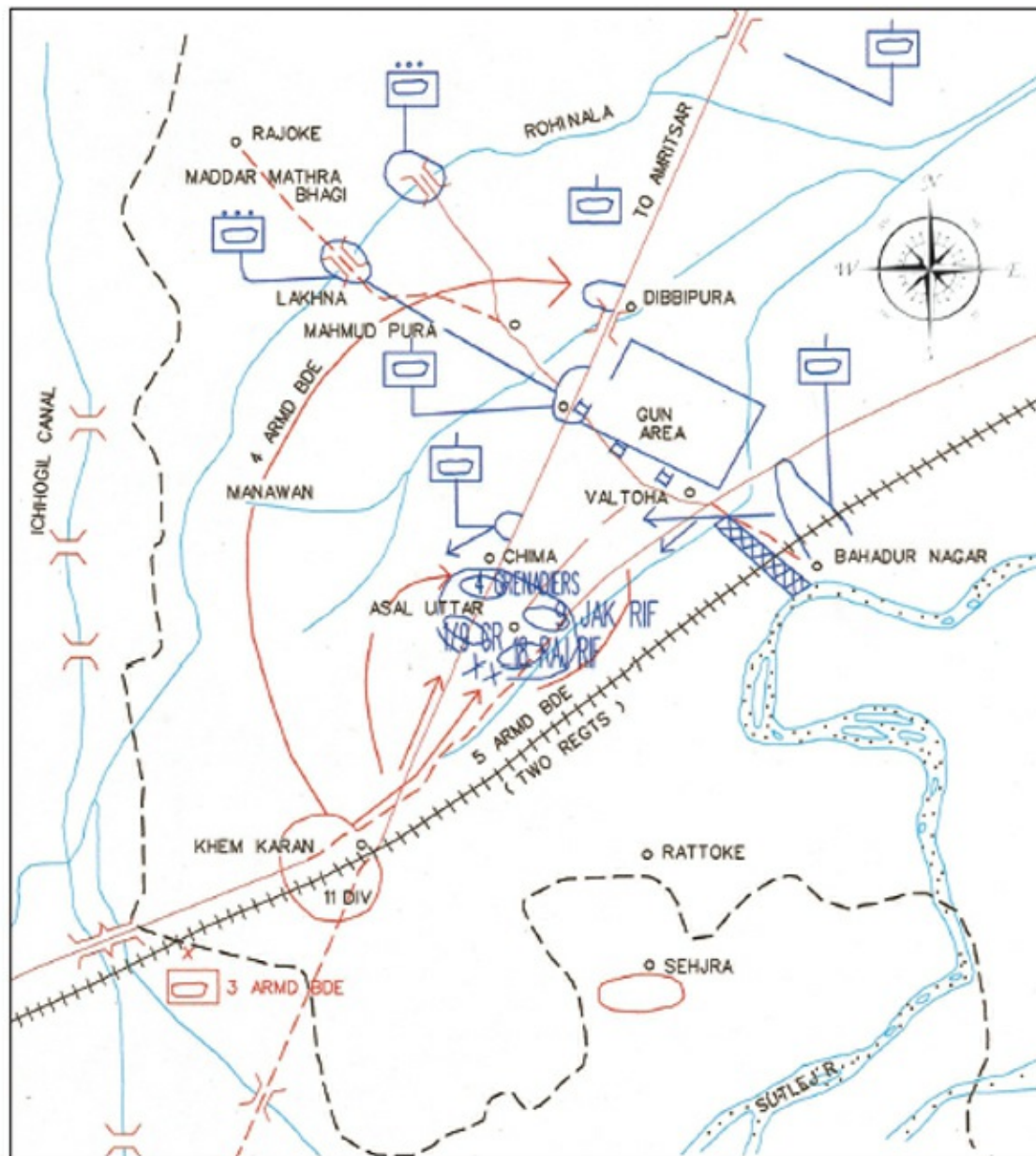
10. 7 Infantry Division Operations



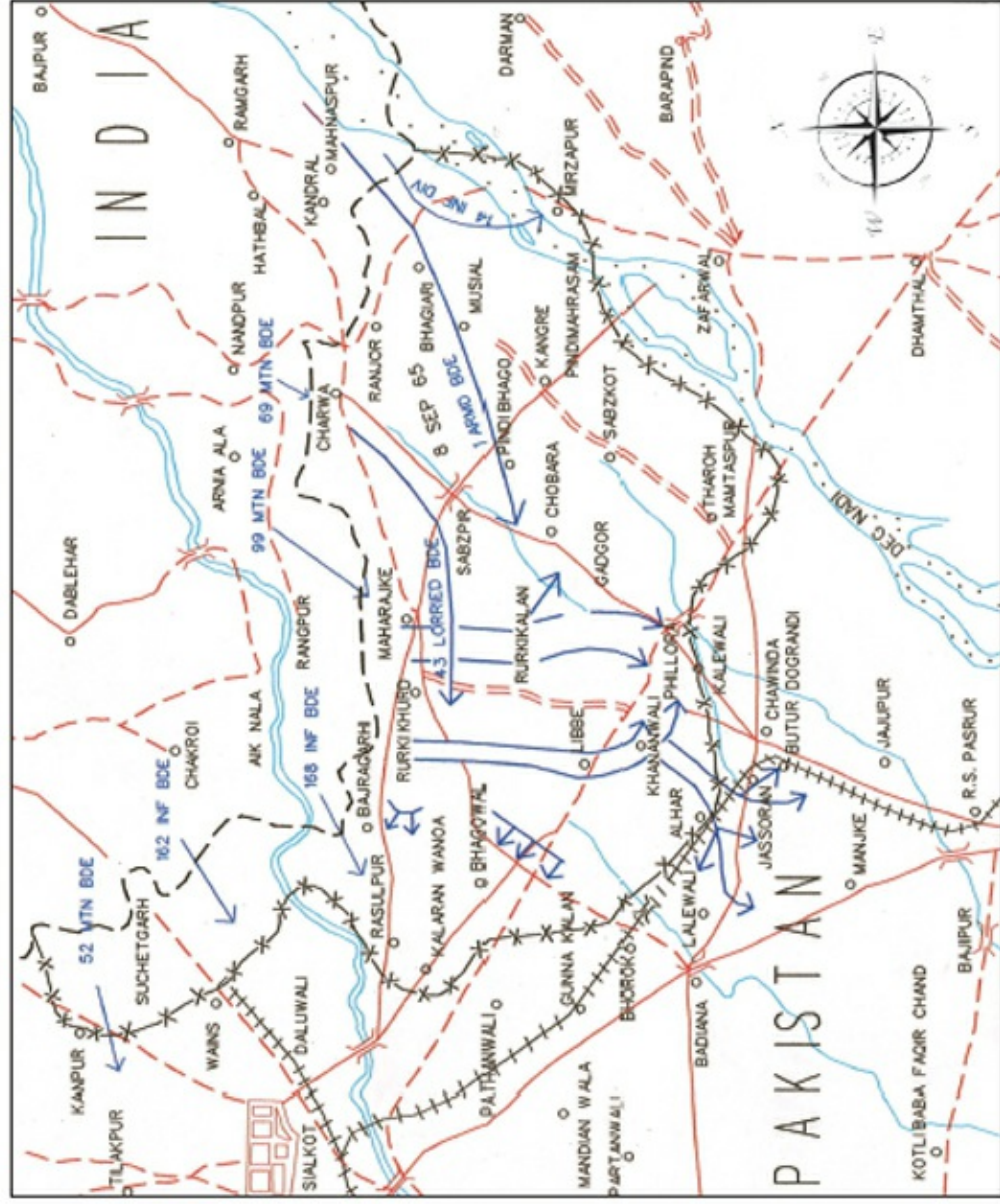
11. Pakistan's 1st Armoured Division Plan September 1965



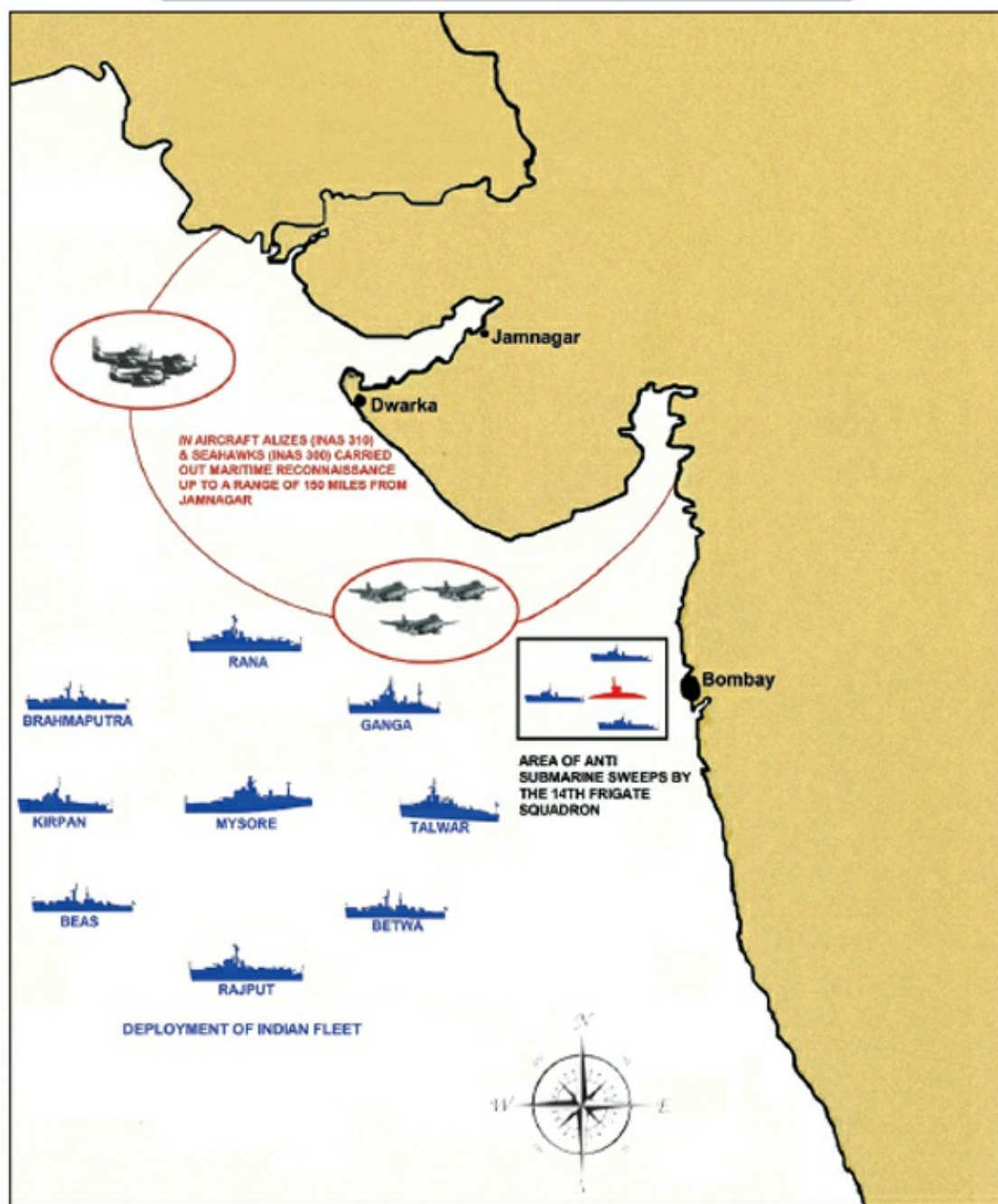
12. Battle of Asal Uttar 8-10 September



13. 1 Corps Battle in the Sialkot sector 8-22 September 1965



14. Naval Operations in the Arabian Sea September 1965



15. Re-constructed Track of Indian Fleet
April to September 1965

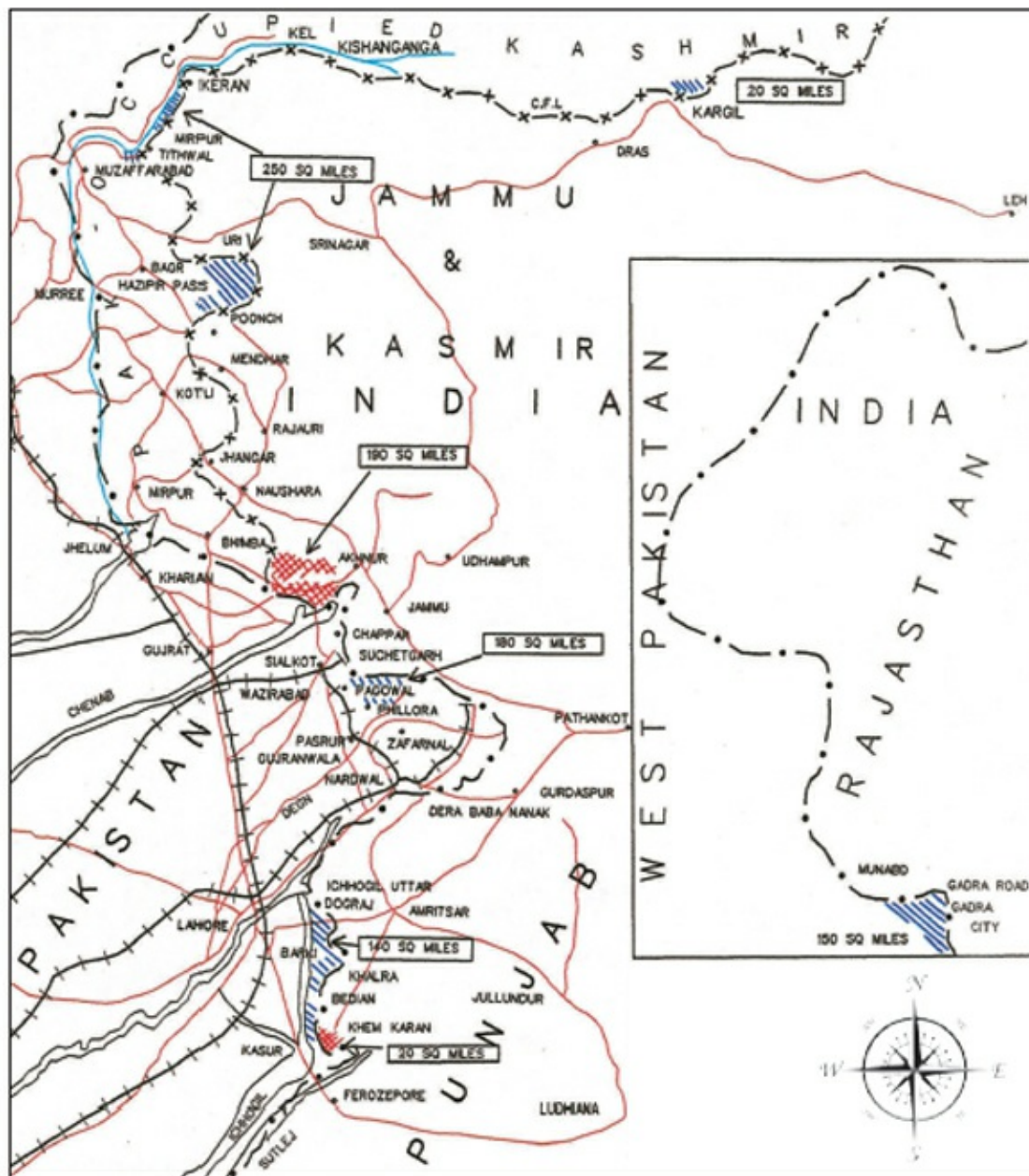
The map illustrates the movement of the Indian Fleet during the 1965 conflict. Key locations and events include:

- 01 SEPTEMBER 65 - INDIAN FLEET DEPLOYED BACK TO THE WEST COAST**
- INDIAN FLEET DEPLOYMENT OFF SUDANHATHA (APR - JUN 65)**
- DEPLOYMENT OF INDIAN FLEET TO THE BAY OF BENGAL (JULY 65)**
- DEPLOYMENT OFF EAST PAKISTAN (END AUGUST 65)**
- ANTI-SUBMARINE EXERCISES OFF MADRAS (JULY 65)**
- PATROLLING OFF A & N ISLANDS (AUGUST 65)**

Ships shown on the map include: VIKRANT, MYSORE, RAJPUT, KIRPA, KALPA, BEAS, and BRANHAPUTRA.



16. Areas Occupied at Ceasefire



All Round Support

A National Effort

The 22-day war, mainly confined to the North, would not have ended in India's favour if the civilian population – truck drivers, labourers, shopkeepers, housewives, farmers and Punjab government employees – had not contributed their might. The citizens of Amritsar city deserve a special mention. The city bore the brunt of Pakistani air raids and suffered a heavy blow to its infrastructure and economy in the daily air raids attempted by the Pakistan Air Force.

DR Mankekar records: 'Party and communal barriers dissolved in the heat of war, and leaders and common people plunged into voluntary civil defence work. Cheering crowds saw marching troops off to the front, garlanded them and their ranks and vehicles, applied kum-kum to their foreheads...'

Pakistani radio tried to woo the Sikhs, who were then agitating for a separate state, but to no avail. Farmers cut their crops prematurely to catch hiding Pakistanis in the fields; housewives and young girls joined community efforts to make thousands of chappatis; hundreds of packets containing chappatis, parched gram and gur were made and flung into passing army vehicles. The "food packets" came in handy for the troops hastily rushed into the battle. General Harbakhsh notes: 'Much of the gallantry and self-sacrifice of the Indian jawan was due to their confidence that the whole country was behind him... the enthusiasm of the civilian population of the area and the emotional backing that they gave to the advancing troops was to be seen to be believed. Food, milk, tea and cold drinks were served free to troops round the clock at numerous stalls set up behind the front lines. The courage and selfconfidence shown by the peasant population in the forward areas also inspired the troops.'

In the early days of fighting, when the army was moving constantly, this help was a great morale booster.

Civilian truck drivers—nearly 1,500 of them—gallantly offered their services. Many of them faced bombing, a few got killed, but most stuck to their task—sometimes driving their heavy trucks through the dark because of the blanket blackout imposed on the entire state. An entire armoured division was assembled in the forward area in less than 24 hours thanks to about 150 brave truck drivers summoned for the job at 24 hours' notice. The trucks often transported troops to the farthest point possible in the absence of adequate military transport. On their return journey, many of them started bringing back Pakistani prisoners of war (PoWs). Mankekar writes: 'Atma Ram of Amritsar was one of the truck drivers who carried supplies to the forward dumps and on the return journey brought the wounded and the Pakistani PoWs. One night, when his convoy was bringing the PoWs back,

Pakistani bombers chased the convoy along the route and tried to bomb them. The convoy came to a halt and the Indian jawans jumped out to take up positions, while Atma Ram and his comrades guarded the trucks containing POWs lest they escape in the darkness.’



Civilian truck drivers with their vehicles

There is another instance of heroism narrated by Mankekar: ‘Truck owner Bhagwan Das and his driver Khairati Lal belonged to a convoy detailed in the Fazilka sector. They were in the thick of a fluid battle that swung back and forth. For seven consecutive days and nights they were on the move, pursued by Pakistani bombers like vultures. Their orders were: “save the ammunition.” They carried out the order, come what may; they drove day and night, without rest or sleep, speeding, halting, speeding again, and when thirsty, drinking water from their truck radiators.’



Jubilant citizens celebrate with the soldiers



NCC cadets guarding Akashwani Bhawan

A notorious smuggler, Sajjan Singh from Dall, a village bang on the border, also joined in the war effort. He apparently said this to the police who caught him trying to smuggle opium—in the middle of the war: ‘Sir, I have hitherto braved death for my belly; now I want to brave death for my country.’ Indeed, he became an invaluable asset, bringing in intelligence on the Lahore sector.

Sarpanches—heads of villages—of border settlements stayed back with their families to help the army with logistics and intelligence.

The boy and girl cadets of the National Cadet Corps (NCC) played a stellar role in defending vital installations and railway lines, and helping in crucial tasks. According to the ‘Extraordinary Gazette of India’ published on 9 September 1965, in exercise of the powers conferred by Section 10 of the National Cadet Corps Act, 1948 (31 of 1948), the central government prescribed the following duties to be performed by NCC officers (senior, junior and girls division) and cadets (including girls) of the senior division who were of the age of 17 years and above: Passive air defence including rescue work, first aid, evacuation of casualties, firefighting and

removal of debris. Manning of civil defence posts including civil defence patrols and lookouts. Maintenance of essential services such as motor transport, pioneer and engineer services, water supply and power supply. Traffic control, manning of static signal installations, messenger service, duties in hospital administration and running of camps in case of movement of civil population, any other allied duties. These duties were performed by the cadets with full zeal and enthusiasm. They also helped in building bunds along the western borders. The cadets were guards at important installations like Akashwani (radio stations), telephone exchanges and post offices.

The railways, too, played a big part in mobilising the army to the front line. Railway employees braved bombings and chaotic situations to carry tanks, troops and ammunition to the farthest point possible. According to reports of the time, 20 railway employees died in the line of duty during the war. In one instance, Chaman Lal, a fireman with the Northern Railway, sacrificed his life in saving a train carrying diesel. He was sitting in a stationary locomotive at the Gurdaspur railway station when a goods train carrying diesel was strafed by Pakistani planes. As one wagon caught fire, Chaman Lal rushed out of his engine and started delinking the wagon on fire from the rest of the train. He did save the train but succumbed to the burn injuries.

Villagers played an extraordinary part in capturing Pakistani paratroopers who were dropped into Punjab in the middle of the war to destroy vital installations and cut off Indian supply lines. Well-trained paratroopers from the crack Special Service Group (SSG) were air-dropped around the airfields of Pathankot, Halwara and Adampur. Their mission was to destroy aircraft and vital installations at the airfields. In each case, villagers were the first responders in spotting them, informing the police and army authorities, and even apprehending them. General Harbakhsh corroborates the same: 'In dealing with the paratroopers, the villagers took a major part in first informing about their presence and then chasing and surrounding them, with nothing more than "lathis", until the ad hoc forces could arrive at the scene. In certain cases, the villagers overpowered armed paratroopers and handed them over to the military authorities. In all cases, the peasantry showed great patriotism, courage and determination.'



Defence Minister YB Chavan with NCC cadets who were drafted for duty



NCC cadets handling a telephone exchange

As the situation blew up into a full-fledged war, offers of help and support towards the war effort started flooding in from different parts of the country. SL Kirloskar, the chairman of Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), appealed to every businessman in every city, town and village to do his duty by the motherland. He stressed the need for the wheels of production to be made faster to keep up with the war demands. In Shimla, the Federation of All-India Jammu and Kashmir Labour volunteered to depute its entire membership of 5,000 people for any defensive role that the country may find for them.

All major cities prepared for blackouts and geared up the civildefence mechanisms. Delhi was divided into 10 zones for civil defence. The city's Municipal Press Karamchari Union, which was threatening to go on strike to have its grievances redressed, shelved the idea and, instead, all the members decided to contribute a day's pay to the National Defence Fund.

The threat of enemy air raids on towns and cities loomed large. Several towns, including Ambala, bore the brunt of this, including damage to civilian areas and

the military hospital. Blackouts at night were a routine precaution taken in all major cities, including Delhi and Mumbai. The living weren't the only ones who had to be thus inconvenienced. The civil-defence measures included banning the burning of funeral pyres between 5 pm and 6 am to avoid presenting a target to enemy aircraft. The annual Ram Leela at Delhi, one of the highlights of the festive season every year, was also cancelled for similar reasons.

The All-India Boy Scouts Association came forward and offered their services in civil-defence jobs, as did several other organisations, including the Gram Raksha Dal and former Indian National Army (INA) soldiers under the leadership of Mohan Singh, a member of parliament at that time and himself a former INA commander. JamAir, a private airlines belonging to the Jam Sahib of Nawanagar, offered their aircraft to ferry troops and essential war supplies.

Blood-donation camps were held throughout the country, and people donated generously to the National Defence Fund, even going to the extent of offering their family ornaments towards the cause of the nation. Young men, eager to fight the enemy, thronged recruitment offices across the country. Truck drivers from across the country offered their services and often ferried supplies and stores meant for the fighting troops, right up to the border. They did so cheerfully and unmindful of the dangers they themselves faced.

Members of all political parties rallied round the government and Prime Minister Shastri, firmly supporting his actions and decisions. Every statement by the prime minister or the Defence Minister YB Chavan in Parliament, giving out the progress of operations and exploits of the Indian soldiers, met with cheers from members all round. Member after member spoke in the Parliament, assuring the government of their unequivocal support in the hours of national crisis.

Finally, some units of Punjab Armed Police (PAP), Rajasthan Armed Constabulary (RAC) and Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) made substantial contributions to the 1965 war. From Kargil to Kutch, they played a supporting, and many a times even an offensive, role.

In sum, the nation as a whole rose to the occasion and secured a creditable win against all odds. This extraordinary turnaround in the country's fortune after the despondency post-1962 came as a major morale booster. Fifty years later, one can only salute all those who made the victory possible.

Victory against All Odds

An Assertive India

How should today's generation recall the 1965 war between India and Pakistan? Who won? Who lost? Or was it a stalemate, as most commentators have concluded?

To get the right answer, we must first define what constitutes a military victory. Is it the capture of a larger territory as compared to what the enemy has attained? Does the killing of thousands of soldiers make it a victory? Is it all about massive destruction of the enemy's military assets? Or does it constitute thwarting the enemy's main objective?

There is no single definition but if one were to go by the answers to all the above questions, there is only one conclusion: India won the war. Let's look at the numbers first.

India's Victory or Pakistan's Loss?

According to official historians Prasad and Thapliyal, India captured 1,920 sq km of Pakistani territory (see [map 16](#)) while losing control over 540 sq km of its own land. While 2,862 Indian soldiers were killed, Pakistan had 5,800 killed, according to then Defence Minister YB Chavan's statement in the Rajya Sabha (Pakistan puts the figure of killed at 1,033).

The biggest loss for Pakistan was the destruction of its armour. Laced with the latest M-47 and M-48 Patton tanks, Pakistan's 1 Armoured Division was seen to be an invincible force at the start of the war. By the time war ended on 22 September, the Pakistani armour, despite its superior tanks, was destroyed by the less-fancied Indian tanks of World War II vintage. Over 450 Pakistani tanks were either completely destroyed or captured by the Indian Army. By comparison, India suffered the loss of less than 100 tanks.

Yet, more than the statistics, it is instructive to look back and figure out if Pakistan could really achieve the objectives with which it initiated the war.

Remember, the first objective was to 'liberate' Jammu and Kashmir from Indian control. Operation Gibraltar was aimed precisely at that. Bhutto had prevailed over the military and forced it to execute a plan that was premised on a faulty assumption that the Kashmiri people would rise up in revolt. The second wrong assumption was that the mixed force of Mujahids and regulars would be able to stand up to the Indian Army's counter-measures.

As it turned out, the Kashmiris did not rebel and the Indian Army, despite its relatively low strength in the Kashmir Valley, managed to neutralise the infiltrators with substantial help from the locals. Pakistan's first strategic objective thus stood defeated.

The failure of Operation Gibraltar brought unbearable pressure on Ayub, forcing him to launch Operation Grand Slam. It was a masterstroke in conception but faltered in execution. India's defences were weak in the Chhamb–Jaurian sector and its intelligence had totally failed to anticipate a Pakistani offensive in that sector. Had Pakistan been able to reach the Akhnoor bridge as planned on 1 September, Kashmir would, in all probability, have been cut off, putting the Indian political and military leadership under great pressure. But a combination of nepotism (Ayub changing the command of the offensive force at a crucial juncture to favour his own favourite, Yahya Khan) and some good old luck saved the day for India, leading to the failure of Pakistan's second strategic objective.

Finally, Pakistan's last shot at glory by sending its much-touted 1 Armoured Division into Khem Karan came a cropper, thanks to a combination of timidity and ineptitude on the part of the Pakistani military leadership and the resolute fight put up by the Indian Army. In the end, the so-called glorious war planned by Ayub turned into a military-politico-diplomatic defeat for Pakistan. So, a country that had begun the war with the ultimate objective of teaching the enemy a lasting lesson was forced to accept international intervention. Air Marshal Asghar Khan notes: 'They (Ayub and the army) had planned Operation Gibraltar for self-glory rather than in the national interest. It was a wrong war. And they misled the nation with a big lie that India, rather than Pakistan, had provoked the war and that we were the victims of Indian aggression.'

As many neutral observers noted in the immediate aftermath of the 22-day war, India was a clear victor. Dennis Kux in his *India and the United States: Estranged democracies* says: 'Although both sides lost heavily in men and material, and neither gained a decisive military advantage, India had the better of the war. New Delhi achieved its basic goal of thwarting Pakistan's attempt to seize Kashmir by force. Pakistan gained nothing from a conflict which it had instigated.' English historian John Keay in his book *India: A History* sums it up accurately: 'The 1965 Indo–Pak war lasted barely a month. Pakistan made gains in the Rajasthan desert but its main push against India's Jammu–Srinagar road link was repulsed and Indian tanks advanced to within a sight of Lahore. Both sides claimed victory but India had most to celebrate.' Stanley Wolpert, the noted writer on the subcontinent's history, had this to say in his book *India*: 'In three weeks the second Indo–Pak war ended in what appeared to be a draw when the embargo placed by Washington on US ammunition and replacements for both armies forced cessation of conflict before either side won a clear victory. India, however, was in a position to inflict grave damage to, if not capture, Pakistan's capital of the Punjab when the ceasefire was called, and controlled Kashmir's strategic Uri–Poonch bulge, much to Ayub's chagrin.'

Fifty years after, it is clear that India not only thwarted the Pakistani designs

but also inflicted unacceptable losses on the Pakistani military, triggering many changes within that country's politico-military structure. Today, even Ayub's own son Gauhar Ayub Khan admits that the war should not have taken place. In an interview to *Outlook*, he says: 'It was a war that should not have taken place. It set Pakistan back and was also costly for India. It led from events in Kashmir which Pakistan considered would be contained there and not turn into an open conflict between the two countries. But when India attacked Lahore and other fronts, it led to a general war between India and Pakistan. Ayub Khan was not looking for a war with India...'

Another crucial mistake that Pakistan made was to seek China's help in putting pressure on India. This angered and alarmed the United States and the United Kingdom. After all, Pakistan was a signatory to the SEATO and CENTO treaties signed mainly to curb the advance of communism. In the prevailing international situation then, it was diplomatic suicide. American President Lyndon Johnson, furious at Pakistan enlisting communist China's help, put an embargo on weapons supply to Pakistan. Pakistan lost the United States as a benefactor until 1979, when the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan rekindled American interest in Pakistan. In fact it can be safely said that the defeat in 1965, firmly propelled Pakistan into the Chinese camp and indeed initiated the process of a Sino-Pakistan nexus against India which, today has assumed a menacing threat to India. Indeed, the Pakistan-China collaboration in 1965 against India provided the template for the current collusion against New Delhi.

Another unintended consequence of the 1965 war was the boost that the opposition leaders in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) received to their demand for more autonomy to the eastern wing. When asked what the security guarantees for the eastern part of undivided Pakistan were against an Indian military campaign, Ayub or his military commanders had no convincing reply. This encouraged Sheikh Mujibur Rehman, leader of the Awami League, to intensify his agitation for greater autonomy for the Bengali-majority East Pakistan. This eventually led to the fragmentation of Pakistan and the creation of Bangladesh, aided in large measure by India's military might and diplomatic offensive in 1971. All the same, if Pakistan suffered internal turmoil in the wake of the 1965 experience, the Indian military too experienced many embarrassing moments. There were lasting lessons too, but first the gaffes.

What India Gained and Lost

While materially India clearly had an upper hand at the end of the war, the Indian military could have done better with a little more dash and imagination on the part of its leaders. Field commanders lacked a clear objective. They did not know during or before the conflict if the aim of the campaign was an all-out war, a war for conquest of territory, or simply to whittle down Pakistan's warwaging capabil-

ity. It was only after the conclusion of the war that the top brass was supposed to have mentioned that the 22-day military campaign was intended to be a war of attrition.

Moreover, except for a limited number of actions, the performance of India's field commanders left a lot to be desired. For most part, the leadership was too defensive—cautious and tentative even—in its thinking. The overall Indian military thinking also lacked a clear understanding of the larger objective. The strategy to attack the enemy on a wide front instead of concentrating attacks at a few vital places proved to be detrimental. At many places—Khem Karan, Mirpur, Dograi, Dera Baba Nanak and even Phillora—the Indian Army brass did not press home the initial advantage it had gained through superior tactical leadership and initiative. In some cases, the senior leadership dithered and failed to lead their men from the front or direct the course of the battle. The lack of an aggressive spirit meant India let go of several opportunities to deliver a crippling blow to the Pakistanis.

The biggest failure, however, was on the intelligence front.

Despite the ongoing tension in Kashmir and the Kutch episode, Indian intelligence failed to anticipate the massive infiltration planned by Pakistan under Operation Gibraltar. There was also a lack of assessment of how Pakistan might respond to failure of Operation Gibraltar. Had the intelligence apparatus been effective, India should have known of the concentration and preparations for the thrust in Chhamb–Jaurian (Operation Grand Slam). But by all accounts, everyone was caught by surprise at the magnitude of the Pakistani offensive launched on 1 September. As PVR Rao, then defence secretary, was to observe later: 'The attack by Pakistan at Chhamb on the morning of 1 September came as a surprise in the exact location and intensity. From 26 August there were heavy Pakistani troop movement in the area under our continuous observation, but the army had concluded that the attack would come further north.'

The bigger failure, and one that was perhaps of a larger strategic import, was India's lack of ability to assess the limits of ammunition available with Pakistan. Despite knowing that the Americans—who were the principal weapons supplier to Pakistan at that time—always gave less than a month's ammunition to its clients, India lacked intelligence on the shortage of ammunition in the Pakistani arsenal. As it turned out, by 22 September—when ceasefire was declared—Pakistan had practically run out of its stock of ammunition, without any replenishment in sight since the Americans had already imposed an arms embargo. Had the war continued for some more time, Pakistan would have collapsed and, who knows, the subcontinental history would have taken a different turn. There was another, perhaps bigger, failure: of correct internal assessment. Army Chief General Chaudhuri told the prime minister to accept the ceasefire offer since by then India had used up most of its front-line ammunition. As it turned out, by 22 September India had consumed

only 14 per cent of its stocks. Moreover, India still had twice the number of Pakistani tanks at that stage of war. What the failure of intelligence cost India then is a matter of conjecture, but something good eventually came out of this. India bifurcated the tasks of collecting external and internal intelligence and created the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW). However, it took another three decades plus and a similar, if smaller, intelligence failure in 1999 to create a dedicated intelligence agency (Defence Intelligence Agency, or DIA) for the military.

In the final analysis, the 1965 war proved that the debacle in the 1962 war had less to do with the Indian Army than with failure on the politico-diplomatic front. The 22-day war could have certainly been conducted better but that's the assessment in hindsight. The truth is: the Indian soldier acquitted himself during August–September 1965 and banished forever the ghosts of the 1962 defeat. The fruits of 1965 were to become spectacularly apparent six years later when the Indian military won its most famous—and decisive—victory in the 1971 war. Had it not been for the experience gained in the 1965 war, the Indian military would still have been prisoner to a defeatist mentality imposed by the reverse against the Chinese. That was the biggest gain from the 1965 war. Let us therefore remember, recall and commemorate the 50 years gone of a war that India has largely forgotten, in an appropriate manner. We, as a nation, owe that debt of gratitude to the martyrs of 1965.



APPENDICES



Appendix 1

Kutch Agreement

Agreement between the Government of India and Government of Pakistan Relating to Ceasefire and the Restoration of the Status Quo as on 1 January 1965 in the Gujarat/West Pakistan Border and Determination of the Border in that Area

New Delhi, 30 June 1965

WHEREAS both the Governments of India and Pakistan have agreed to a ceasefire and to restoration of the status quo as at 1 January 1965, in the area of the Gujarat/West Pakistan border, in the confidence that this will also contribute to a reduction of the present tension along the entire Indo/Pakistan border;

WHEREAS it is necessary that after the status quo has been established in the aforesaid Gujarat/West Pakistan border area, arrangements should be made for determination and demarcation of the border in that area; NOW THEREFORE, the two Governments agree that the following action shall be taken in regard to the said area:

Article 1 There shall be an immediate ceasefire with effect from 0030 hrs GMT 1 July, 1965.

Article 2 on the ceasefire:

- (i) All troops on both sides will immediately begin to withdraw;
- (ii) This process will be completed within seven days;
- (iii) Indian police may then re-occupy the post at Chhad Bet in strength no greater than that employed at the post on 31 December 1964;
- (iv) Indian and Pakistan police may patrol on the tracks on which they were patrolling prior to 1 January 1965, provided that their patrolling will not exceed in intensity that which they were doing prior to 1 January 1965 and during the monsoon period will not exceed in intensity that done during the monsoon period of 1964;
- (v) If patrols of Indian and Pakistan police should come into contact they will not interfere with each other, and in particular will act in accordance with West Pakistan/India border ground rules agreed to in January 1960;
- (vi) Officials of the two Governments will meet immediately after the ceasefire and from time to time thereafter as may prove desirable in order to consider whether any problems arise in the implementation of the provisions of paragraphs (iii) to (v) above and to agree on the settlement of any such problem.

Article 3

- (i) In view of the fact that:

(A) India claims that there is no territorial dispute as there is a well-established boundary running roughly along the northern edge of the Rann of Kutch as shown in the pre-partition maps, which needs to be demarcated on the ground;

(B) Pakistan claims that the border between India and Pakistan in the Rann of Kutch runs roughly along the 24th parallel as is clear from several pre-partition and post-partition documents and therefore the dispute involves some 3,500 square miles of territory;

(C) At discussions in January 1960, it was agreed by Ministers of the two Governments that they would each collect further data regarding the Kutch–Sind boundary and that further discussions would be held later with a view to arriving at a settlement of this dispute; as soon as officials have finished the task referred to in Article 2 (vi), which in any case will not be later than one month after the ceasefire, Ministers of the two Governments will meet in order to agree on the determination of the border in the light of their respective claims, and the arrangements for its demarcation. At this meeting and at any proceeding before the Tribunal referred to in Article 3 (ii) and (iv) below, each Government will be free to present and develop their case in full.

(ii) In the event of no agreement between the Ministers of the two Governments on the determination of the border being reached within two months of the ceasefire, the two Governments shall, as contemplated in the joint communiqué of 24 October 1959, have recourse to the Tribunal referred to in (iii) below for determination of the border in the light of their respective claims and evidence produced before it and the decision of the Tribunal shall be final and binding on both parties.

(iii) For this purpose there will be constituted, within four months of the ceasefire, a Tribunal consisting of three persons, one of whom would be a national of either India or Pakistan. One member shall be nominated by each Government and the third member, who will be the Chairman, shall be jointly selected by the two Governments. In the event of the two Governments failing to agree on the selection of the Chairman within three months of the ceasefire, they shall request the Secretary-General of the United Nations to nominate the Chairman.

(iv) The decision of the Tribunal referred to in (iii) above shall be binding on both Governments, and shall not be questioned on any ground whatsoever. Both Governments undertake to implement the Findings of the Tribunal in full as quickly as possible and shall refer to the Tribunal for decision of any difficulties which may arise between them in the implementation of these findings.

For that purpose the Tribunal shall remain in being until its findings have been implemented in full.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF the undersigned have signed the present Agreement.

DONE in duplicate at New Delhi, this thirtieth day of June, 1965, in the English language.

For the Government of India Sd/- M. AZIM HUSAIN

For the Government of Pakistan Sd /- M.A. HUSAIN

(Incidentally, the two signatories from the opposite sides were related to each other.)

Appendix 2

Rise to Meet the Challenge

[Text of Prime Minister Shastri's broadcast to the Nation, New Delhi, September 3, 1965]

MY FELLOW COUNTRYMEN: I speak to you tonight to acquaint you with the situation that has arisen as a result of Pakistan's aggression against us and to share with you the anxieties and the responsibilities devolving on us in this critical hour. As you know, on September 1, Pakistan mounted a heavy attack in brigade strength in the Chhamb sector of Jammu. The attack was supported by heavy artillery and tanks of the Pakistan army. Our Armed Forces went into action against them and knocked out several tanks and many army vehicles. Pakistan's initial thrust has been halted. An instance of what Pakistan is doing in that area is the bombing by the Pakistan Air Force of civilians, killing many men, women and children, as well as destroying a mosque. The people of Jammu and Kashmir are facing the situation with great fortitude. I wish to pay a warm tribute to our security forces. The whole nation is proud of them and has the fullest confidence in their ability to defend the country. The whole country stands behind them.

The attempt of the armed raiders who had entered Kashmir earlier to damage bridges and administrative and military centres and to commit other acts of sabotage, has largely failed. The raiders failed also in enlisting the sympathy of the local population. In fact, they had to indulge in acts of loot and arson to sustain themselves. The raiders were able to move about in villages for a few days under the cover of darkness, but this phase is now over and many of the infiltrators have been driven to seek cover in thick jungles. The presence of these infiltrators within Kashmir and their sporadic attempts at sabotage make it essential that we should be constantly alert and vigilant.

The infiltrators were well armed with modern weapons and the whole operation was conceived, planned and executed by Pakistan. This, we believe, has been established beyond doubt in the reports submitted by the Chief Military Observer to the United Nations Secretary General. These reports, in spite of our request, have not seen the light of day. We have dealt successfully with hundreds of infiltrators and, as an inescapable measure of self defence, we have to take military action to occupy certain strategic posts beyond the cease-fire line in order to block the routes of the infiltrators. Some bands of raiders are, however, still attempting to come in with full backing of the Pakistan army. Pakistan has denied responsibility for such infiltrations. The Pakistan Government has endeavoured to create the myth, and this myth has been reiterated in President Ayub Khan's broadcast of September 1, that the infiltrators are freedom fighters and that there is an internal revolt in Kash-

mir. The whole world knows that there is no revolt. The Indian people of Kashmir have remained calm and have co-operated with the authorities in tracking down the infiltrators.

In 1947-48, Pakistan continued to deny for several months after she had sent her troops illegally into Kashmir, that they were there. It was only in 1948, when the truth could no longer be hidden, that the Pakistan representative confessed to the United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan that Pakistan forces had been fighting in Kashmir for several months.

In the Agreement between India and Pakistan in connection with the Gujarat-West Pakistan border, signed on June 30 of this year, Pakistan solemnly affirmed its hope that the Agreement would result in better relations and easing of tensions between India and Pakistan. The conscience of the world would be shocked to know that even at the time that this Agreement was being signed, Pakistan had already drawn up a plan of armed infiltrations into Kashmir and was training its personnel in Murree for the operations which were undertaken just over a month later, even before the ink was dry on the Agreement of June 30. Such conduct speaks for itself.

The Pakistani ruling circles accuse India of practicing colonialism in Kashmir. President Ayub seems to have forgotten that the State of Jammu and Kashmir, juridically and in fact is a part of India. The people of Kashmir are Indian citizens who enjoy all the rights and privileges guaranteed to them under the Constitution of India unlike their unfortunate brethren across the cease-fire line in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

Let me add that our quarrel is not with the people of Pakistan. We wish them well, we want them to prosper and we want to live in peace and friendship with them.

What we are up against is a regime which does not believe in freedom, democracy and peace, as we do. It talks glibly of a plebiscite in Kashmir, while it is not prepared to have a free election in its own country. In the State of Jammu and Kashmir there have been three elections since 1949. What once was a princely State, ruled on dynastic principles, is now a State in our Federation under a Constitution which guarantees civil rights, freedom of worship and free elections. How would Pakistan like a plebiscite in the Pakhtoon area to find out whether it wishes to remain a part of Pakistan? How would Pakistan like a plebiscite in East Bengal to find out whether the people of East Bengal want to be ruled from Rawalpindi?

What is at stake in the present conflict is a point of principle. Has any country the right to send its armed personnel to another with the avowed object of overthrowing a democratically elected Government?

I have received a communication from the Secretary General of the United Nations containing an appeal to both sides to observe the ceasefire line. The Secre-

tary-General has appealed both to Pakistan and to India for peace. We believe in peace. We have worked for it and we shall never cease to work for peace.

Those who want peace will always have our support and cooperation, but they must face the realities of the situation. A ceasefire is not peace. We cannot simply go from one ceasefire to another and wait till Pakistan chooses to start hostilities again.

President Ayub, in his recent broadcast, referred to the conversation he had with me in October 1964. It is perfectly true that, when I agreed to meet President Ayub, I had done so with a desire to promote a better understanding between India and Pakistan. He had brought up the Kashmir question and said that Pakistan felt strongly about this matter. At that time, I had told him in reply, in the dearest possible terms, that if public opinion in Pakistan was very strong on this matter, the Indian opinion was also equally strong, if not stronger than that in Pakistan. There was, therefore, no easy solution to this problem. I asked him to devote attention to other issues which were urgent, for instance, the question of continuous firing across the cease-fire line. President Ayub said that he was himself worried over this and was willing to have this position reviewed immediately. In fact he himself suggested a meeting of the commanders of the two sides to sort out this problem. When subsequently such an idea was mooted, Pakistan did not react favourably. President Ayub did raise the question of evictees and I also referred to the huge number of refugees coming into India. It was agreed between us that the Home Ministers of the two Governments should meet to discuss this matter. On my return to India, action was initiated for a meeting of the Home Ministers- Specific dates were suggested on more than one occasion, but Pakistan, on one pretext or another, did not agree to our suggestions for quite some time. Eventually, November 1 date was fixed and India's delegation was announced, but this meeting was called off by Pakistan on the ground that they were busy with their elections. These details I am mentioning because apparently President Ayub has forgotten them altogether. That can be the only reason for his having made the observations that he did.

What is the duty and responsibility of our citizens in this hour of serious crisis? Your foremost duty at the present moment is to do everything possible to ensure that peace is not disturbed and that communal harmony is maintained. There are no Hindus, no Muslims, no Christians, no Sikhs, but only Indians. I am confident that the people of this country who have given proof of their patriotism and common sense on so many occasions in the past, will stand united as one man to defend their country. We must all be on guard against mischief makers and enemy agents who may try to instigate communal disturbances. The Government will deal firmly with any such persons.

Our security scheme in regard to Civil Defence measures is being enforced with immediate effect in the Punjab and in Delhi. Later, it would be extended to

additional areas. Those of you who are called upon to participate in this scheme should come forward and undertake the task in the spirit of a soldier at his post. Home Guards will be strengthened in the urban areas. I would like men and women to join the Home Guards in large numbers. To the industrial workers, I would like to address a personal appeal. I know of their patriotism and I am sure it would be uppermost in their minds. We have to maximize production in our industrial units and we have to maintain our communications, our harbours and our supply lines in a state of maximum efficiency. Every worker should make the best possible contribution he can towards the achievement of these objectives.

The men of business and industry have a very heavy responsibility in the present situation. The supply of essential consumer goods to the community must be maintained. Prices have not only to be maintained; they have to be brought down. Men engaged in the wholesale and retail trades must themselves exercise great restraint and serve the country at this time with a sense of patriotic duty.

The country has to prepare itself for hard days ahead. Everyone must perform his duty fully and faithfully. We may have to suffer damage from air raids. The nation must get into the mood which is necessary for undergoing sufferings and making sacrifices cheerfully. This is the price of freedom which we all have to pay. This is a call to the nation to rise and meet the challenge.

Appendix 3

We Must not Slacken

Text of Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri's speech (in Hindi) made at Ramlila Grounds, New Delhi, 26 September 1965.

AUGUST 5 is a date which has acquired a special significance in our history. It will be difficult for us to forget this date, at least for some time. The chain of events that started on August 5 is continuing even now. On that date, thousands of armed men from Pakistan entered Kashmir. They moved swiftly and created a dangerous situation, a situation which was dangerous not only for Kashmir but for all of us. You can imagine how serious a situation can become when five to seven thousand armed men invade a country. A few months ago, Mr Bhutto said that Pakistan had a "master plan" for Kashmir and that they proposed to follow this plan step by step. We were aware of what Mr Bhutto had said and, therefore, had some inkling of what was in store. But we could never have imagined that Pakistan would try to put her "master plan" into action so soon after the Kutch agreement. You all know how particular we were that the Kutch problem should be solved through peaceful negotiations, We also signed an Agreement to this effect. It is most unfortunate and it has been a great shock to me personally that even while we were in the process of signing the Kutch Agreement, full-fledged preparations for an attack on Kashmir were going on in Pakistan. What could be more improper and perfidious than this? While we on our part were trying our best to solve all our boundary problems peacefully, Pakistan was preparing to attack our country on a much larger scale than the attack in Kutch. Obviously, Pakistan was only making a show of willingness to solve the Kutch dispute peacefully.

This was the background of the attack on Kashmir. It was natural for us to fight back with all our power and all our resources in an effort to repulse this attack. The task of our security forces was no easy one, for these infiltrators came furtively in twos and threes taking cover in ravines and desolate mountain tracks. Pakistan believed that the people of Kashmir would revolt against their Government. The armed infiltrators were convinced that as soon as they entered Kashmir, the Kashmiri people would throw in their lot with them and help them in over-throwing the Government, so that their land could become part of Pakistan. The armed infiltrators attacked police posts, tried to reach the airport, and made many attempts to set fire to villages and towns. While they were indulging in such activities, the people of Kashmir did not give them food or shelter and did not co-operate with them in any way whatsoever. They demonstrated more clearly than any argument could have done that Kashmir was an integral part of India, and that it had nothing to do with Pakistan.

In my judgment, it was a great blow to Pakistan that a territory which they had imagined would join Pakistan within two or three days did not do anything of the kind. It soon became clear to Pakistan that the people of Kashmir, far from helping the intruders, would withstand their attack and stoutly resist them to the last. When this scheme of sending infiltrators into Kashmir to create a “revolution” did not succeed, Pakistan resorted to the method of attacking with regular armed forces. As you all know, India did not indulge in any aggressive activity, did not attack an inch of Pakistan’s territory in the beginning. Even when they were sending armed men into Kashmir, we only took measures to prevent them from coming into our territory.

At first Pakistan’s attack was a disguised one, and they persisted in saying that the trouble in Kashmir had been created by the people themselves. But in such matters truth cannot be concealed indefinitely, and Pakistan’s intention became more than clear when they launched their full-scale attack in Chhamb with infantry divisions and a hundred tanks.

This was no border incident, and they crossed not only the cease-fire line but also the international border and entered the Chhamb territory of Jammu. Time was of the essence and we had to act quickly. Although Pakistan’s attack on India was first launched in Chhamb, they had an eye on our territory of Punjab also. As you know, they made a rocket attack on Amritsar and tried to destroy the airport near Wagah.

President Ayub had been talking a great deal about the tanks and other military equipment Pakistan had acquired and had on many occasions boasted that if they decided to march to Delhi. It would be a walkover. The military situation created by Pakistan was such that our Forces had no choice but to advance in the Lahore sector. The British Government criticised India bitterly for her action and accused her of attacking Pakistan but did not say that India had been attacked by Pakistan when thousands of armed infiltrators from Pakistan entered Kashmir. Nor did they say a word when Pakistan crossed the international border, or even when Pakistan launched her massive attack on Chhamb with heavy armour.

Pakistan’s attack was so formidable and so swift that we could not afford merely to talk of defending ourselves. We had to take decisive, effective action, without losing time. The needs of the situation could no longer be answered by local action. We could not afford to endanger the freedom of our country; no country in the world would have allowed its freedom to be threatened as ours was. We have always held fast to the principle of peace, but in the situation that was created, not to act would have been cowardice and sloth. The display of armed might we saw within our territory could be resisted only with arms. It is not customary to let out State secrets. But I can tell you that when our Generals consulted the Government about the situation, I told them firmly that there was no room for indecision,

that they must go ahead and not flinch.

And the Indian Army did not flinch. They advanced in Sialkot, Kasur, Lahore and across the Rajasthan border. They took the town of Dadra and captured many posts and dug into their positions. The Security Council, and indeed the whole world, started to talk of peace. We have no objection to peace and do not want the conflict between Pakistan and India to become a conflagration where all the countries of the world have to come in. The world knows that we have time and again offered our services for peacekeeping operations. Our great Leader, Jawaharlal Nehru, worked for peace all his life and on cannot suddenly forget these principles. We hold steadfastly to the ideals of peace in the world. We want to live in our country in peace, so that we can work for progress, so that we can fight the poverty of our people and build up a new society for them. We are content in our own country and do not want to grab anybody else's Territory. Nothing could be farther from our minds than to become the cause of armed conflicts in the world.

That is why we agreed at once when the question of peace and a cease-fire was brought up. We had talks with the Secretary General of the United Nations when he came here and told him that we would agree to a cease-fire. Even after Pakistan accepted the ceasefire, she continued air attacks and shelling on Indian positions and did not desist from trying to inch her way forward all along the border. It is for the United Nations or the Security Council to judge the appropriateness or otherwise of Pakistan's actions after the announcement of the cease-fire.

It has been said that it is we who have attacked Pakistan after the cease-fire. I want to say categorically that our armies have not attacked any part of Pakistan's territory anywhere, after the ceasefire. Of course, if they attack us, we have to resist them and repulse their attacks. But we on our part sincerely wish to maintain the cease-fire. Even after the ceasefire, Pakistan has been making free use of the language of threats. Every day Mr Bhutto makes menacing speeches. If the Security Council and the other big powers allow themselves to be pressurised by his speeches, it will create a very difficult situation for us. If Mr Bhutto maintains that Pakistani forces will withdraw when the Kashmir issue is solved, I would like to submit to him that the Kashmir issue cannot be solved in this way. If Pakistan is not willing to withdraw her forces, our lawns will also stay where they are.

The issues in the Kashmir dispute are too well known to need repetition. Pakistan demands that we should withdraw from Haji Pir, Tithwal and from Kargil. But are they not in unlawful occupation of the whole of what they call "Azad Kashmir"? Is that a part of Pakistan? If you look at the old proposals and resolutions of the Security Council, you will see that the administration of the so-called "Azad Kashmir" is the responsibility of the Government of Jammu and Kashmir. Pakistan should first withdraw from the so-called "Azad Kashmir" and then talk to us of Tithwal and Kargil. Our stand on Kashmir is quite clear and Pakistan's language of

threats will not do much good. Kashmir is a part of India and no part of India can be served from it. It is as simple as that. It is unfortunate that Pakistan should have attacked India in order to grab Kashmir. There is no international law or practice where by one country can attack another with all her armed might in order to force the solution of an issue which had already been brought before the Security Council. The Security Council and all the countries of the world must take cognisance of India's legal position and of our lawful rights while approaching the Kashmir issue. It is true that relations between India and Pakistan should be cordial and we have no objection to any country or power trying to bring the two countries closer together. After all Pakistan and India are neighbours and it is equally difficult for both of them to progress if they live in tension and with feelings of hostility towards each other. Good. Neighbourliness is a proposition we endorse whole-heartedly. But it is very difficult for us to accept a situation wherein Kashmir is used as a basis for resolving the problems and tensions between India and Pakistan.

Pakistan wants the Security Council to meet again within a week. What would be the purpose of this meeting? Pakistan has yet not given effect even to the first part of the Security Council's resolution. What then is the point of going on with other things? Other problems can be taken up after the first part of the resolution is fulfilled, Mr Bhutto seems very keen on hearing his own voice in the Security Council. Perhaps that is why he wants another Security Council meeting. What is the point of our attending another meeting of the Security Council when Pakistan is being allowed to disregard the first part of the resolution? We may have to consider whether we should attend such a meeting at all. We hope that the Security Council will deliberate carefully before it calls an emergency meeting. The Security Council's proposals should first be carried out faithfully and only then should another meeting be called, if it is considered necessary. In that case we shall certainly attend the meeting, take part in the debate and put forth our point of view.

I want to appeal to you not to let the cease-fire make you complacent and slack. It would be a great mistake for us to feel that the conflict with Pakistan has been resolved. We must be prepared for everything. We do not know what form this conflict may take ; and we must always remember China's threat. We are facing a grave situation. Although there is no cause for panic, I am sure all of you can well imagine how much discipline such a situation calls for. We must be prepared to face difficulties, willing to do without things, willing to sacrifice. We must become deeply aware of the threat that hangs over us and fashion our daily lives accordingly. It is possible that we may have to delay some of our plans and schemes, for progress in order to concentrate on defence preparations. We have to strengthen our defences and maintain our equipment in good order, even if we have to do without food, I do not say that we will be in such a situation but a situation may arise when we would have to eat much less than we do now. Defence will have to

be our first priority for some time to come. There are some friendly countries who want to help us and we welcome their support. But even if they do not help us, we have to be prepared to subsist on the barest minimum and meet our defence needs somehow or the other, I want every village in this country to be aware of the situation, to be alive to the need for producing more food grains in the country.

We shall have to cut down the cash crops and concentrate on wheat, paddy, jowar, bajra and such crops as much as possible. The whole country must be united in the resolve to produce more and to improve agriculture on the one hand and, on the other, to consume as little as possible. I would advise those who are not vegetarians to consume less rice and wheat. The lavishness of its hotels and restaurants, where one course is followed by another, must come to a stop. We must eat only as much as is absolutely necessary. I am telling you this with the greatest seriousness because the need to save food has become crucial to our very existence in the situation today. Even the feasts that are customary in marriages and festivals must be restrained and held on a small scale if they must be held. We must make an earnest effort to save in whatever way we can.

Another thing I would like to stress is that the psychology of hoarding must be nipped in the bud. Many people think they are doing nothing wrong if they keep enough grain for a month or two in their homes in these uncertain times, but this is not so. It would be grossly unfair to the country if we kept even one more grain of wheat or rice than we normally needed.

What are we afraid of? What is achieved if a handful of people manage to protect themselves against shortages? What is the point of saving our lives at the expense of thousands of our countrymen? It is much better to die. If we understand all this, we shall certainly be able to defend ourselves. When I returned from Russia, I told you about the city of Leningrad where 500,000 people died in the defence of their city. Many of them died of starvation, I do not say that this grim picture is about to become a reality in our country, but at the same time we must try to produce enough for our needs within the country. Each man should willingly share with his brother, with his neighbour, whatever he has, so that nobody need starve. This is what we must resolve today.

It is true that the Government must face its own responsibilities and fulfil the needs of the country. But I would like to appeal to all traders that in the matter of prices and the price-line, it does not behove us today to talk of legal restrictions and disciplinary action. The situation demands that the traders must hold the price-line. The traders and dealers can be of great help and service in this hour. If they guarantee price stability, the other tasks that are before us today can be carried out without unnecessary complications.

I know that we are capable of combining our efforts for Civil Defence in a most effective manner. I would like to congratulate those who made such success-

ful Civil Defence arrangements in the city of Delhi, all within two or three days. The whole city was plunged in darkness but not a single untoward incident was reported_ The civilian population, including children, were intent on making the blackout a success. This is a time when we must not depend on officers and official organisers. Each one of us must feel responsible for our own Civil Defence, and prepare ourselves coolly and calmly to face bombing raids or any other kind of attack. In such eventualities. We must not give way to panic and run for our lives but stand firm. Ready to be of help. Each city, each town, each village in the country must prepare itself. I am confident that the young people of our country will come forward and contribute their effort in Civil Defence most ungrudgingly.

I want to say one more thing. The B.R.C. has said that since India's Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri is a Hindu, he is ready for war with Pakistan. There is no doubt that I am a Hindu. Mir Mushtaq Sahib who is presiding over this meeting is a Muslim. Mr Frank Anthony who has also addressed you is a Christian. There are also Sikhs and Parsis here. The unique thing about our country is that we have Hindus, Muslims. Christians, Sikhs, Parsis and people of all other religions. We have temples and mosques, gurdwaras and churches. But we do not bring all this into politics. We are not working to make India a Hindu State or a Muslim State. This is the difference between India and Pakistan. Whereas Pakistan proclaims herself to be an Islamic State and uses religion as a political factor, we Indians have the freedom to follow whatever religion we may choose to worship in any way we please. So far as politics is concerned, each one of us is as much an Indian as the other. It is a distortion of facts to accuse India of hostility to Pakistan on account of the narrow point of view of religion. After all China is not an Islamic State! So far as the territorial integrity of India is concerned, we have taken the same stand with China AS we have taken with Pakistan. If China attacks us, we shall resist bier and defend ourselves with all the resources at our command, no matter how great her might. The defence of the country has nothing to do with religion; it is a matter of the freedom and sovereignty of the Motherland. Not an inch of our land shall be severed from us. We must have it and be prepared to sacrifice our lives in the effort.

In this crisis there has been a great demonstration of unity and discipline in the country. This has meant a new upsurge of life and I have full faith that the morale of our people will remain as high as it is today. Anyone who undermines this morale in any way will be playing into Pakistan's hands. Whoever brings up internal dissensions, whoever breaks the peace and unity of the country will be -considered a traitor. We must guard our unity and cherish it. If we are united and resolved, if we are able to feed ourselves through our own efforts, if we are prepared for sacrifices to strengthen our defences, I have no doubt that our army will be able to defend our freedom wherever that Freedom may be threatened.

Yesterday, I visited some of our wounded Jawans and officers in the military hospital. They have been badly hurt but I did not see a single tear or even a sad face, However serious the injury or wound was, each of them was smiling and cheerful. An officer whose leg had been amputated told me with pride that he had shot down a Pakistani officer after his leg received the injury on the battlefield. I was very much moved to see another officer, Bhupinder Singh, whose whole body was covered with blood. Even now it is difficult to put a piece of cloth anywhere on his body. He was lying in bed with eyes closed. He apologised to me for not being able to stand up to show respect to the Prime Minister who was visiting him. He told me that he destroyed seven enemy tanks and that his Unit had knocked out thirty-one. He also said that he was sure he would get well again but even if he did not, it did not matter because the country can now hold its head high. I told him how proud the country was of him, how deeply grateful the people of the country were for the way in which the Indian Army Forces had faced the enemy. Every child, every man and woman in this country has the deepest respect for the men of the Indian Army, for the Air Force pilots and other fighters. The whole country is deeply aware of the sacrifices they have made and cherishes them. We shall stand by our Armed Forces with all our strength and make it possible for them to lead the country from victory to victory. I believe that justice is on our side, that fairness is on our side, that truth is on our side and that the final victory will be ours.

Appendix 4

Approximate Military Strength of India and Pakistan

as on 1 September 1965

	<i>Pakistan</i>	<i>India</i>
Popu- lation De- fence Budget (1964- 65) Army Strength	98,570,000 \$269,000,000 260,000 (including 30,000 'so called Azad Kashmir' troops)	470,000,000 \$970,000,000 700,000 (excluding civilians, non-combat- ants, nursing personnel and boys)
In- fantry	7 x infantry divi- sions. Also 250,000 lightly armed militia	9 x infantry divisions (of these 4 were on a reduced establishment) and 11 x mountain di- visions (most of them newly raised and some of them under strength and not fully reequipped) deployed against the Chinese.
Ar- mour	2 armoured divi- sions (one of them was allegedly 1/3rd of nor- mal strength) compris- ing the following: • 9 regiments – Patton • 5 regiments – Sherman • 3 regiments – Chaffee	One armoured divisions (with only one ar- moured brigade), one independent armoured brigade and 5 independent armoured squadrons, comprising the following: • 4 regiments – Centurion • 8 regiments – Sherman • 2 regiments – AMX-XIII
	Total No. of Tanks = 765	Total No. of Tanks = 720
* The Military Balance, 1964-65, IISS, London. The figures pertain to Oc- tober 1964. The population of Pakistan was 101,000,000 in November 1965.		

Ar- tillery	4 field regiments (SP) – 25 pounder guns (SP) 105 mm Howitzer (SP) 25 field regiments – 25 pounder/105 mm guns/105 mm Howitzer 10 med regiments – 5.5” guns/155 mm Howitzer One heavy regiment – 155 mm guns/8” Howitzer 8 mortar regiments – 120 mm mortars 3 LAA regiments (SP) – 32×40 mm Single guns 32×.50” guns in quads	25 mountain regiments – 3.7” Howitzer/76 mm guns 41 field regiments – 25 pounder 2 Para field regiments 100 mm guns 10 medium regiment – 5.5”/130 mm guns One heavy regiment – 7.2” guns 19 light regiments – 120 mm mortars 21 Air Defence regiments – L 60 (towed) Bofors guns A few L 70 guns also.
Naval Strength	Naval Personnel – 8,000 Light Cruiser – 1 Destroyers – 5 Anti Submarine Warfare Frigates – 2 Minesweepers – 8 Other Ships – 12 Coast Guard Force – 1,500 Naval aircraft included Albatross and some UH – 19 helicopters	Naval Personnel – 17,000 Cruisers – 2 Destroyers – 6 ASW Frigates – 5 Anti Aircraft Frigates – 3 Minesweepers – 6 Other Ships – 25 Coast Guard Force – Nil Naval aircraft included 24 Sea Hawks strike interceptors and 15 Alize ASW aircraft
Air Force Strength	Personnel – 25000 Aircraft – 260 B-57 bomber – 2 squadrons	Personnel – 63,000 Aircraft – about 700 4 bomber suqadrons – Canberra 32 fighter squadrons:

Star Fighter			Gnat – 5 squadrons
F-104	–	1	MIG – 7 aircraft only
squadron			Hunter – 6 squadrons
F-86 Sabre	–	8	Mystere – 5 squadrons
squadrons			Vampire – 6 squadrons
One recce sqn of			Ouragon – 3 squadrons
high flying RB-57			13 Transport Squadrons:
2 training/tactical			Dakota – 3 squadrons
recce squadrons			Packet – 3 squadrons
One Maritime			AN-12 – 2 squadrons
recce and sea air res-			Caribou – 1 squadron
cue sqn of helicopters			IL-14 – 1 squadron
and Amphibians SA-			Otter – 2 squadrons
16 planes 2 transport			Supper
sqns			Constellation – 1 squadrons
One C-130 her-			5 Helicopter squadrons:
cules squadron			Mi-4 – 4 units
One Bristol			Alouette – 1 unit
squadron			

Appendix 5

Tashkent Declaration

January 10, 1966

Tashkent Declaration signed by the Prime Minister of India and the President of Pakistan

Tashkent

The Prime Minister of India and the President of Pakistan having met at Tashkent and having discussed the existing relations between India and Pakistan, hereby declare their firm resolve to restore normal and peaceful relations between their countries and to promote understanding and friendly relations between their peoples. They consider the attainment of these objectives of vital importance for the welfare of the 600 million people of India and Pakistan.

I

The Prime Minister of India and the President of Pakistan agree that both sides will exert all efforts to create good neighbourly relations between India and Pakistan in accordance with the United Nations Charter. They reaffirm their obligation under the Charter not to have recourse to force and to settle their disputes through peaceful means. They considered that the interests of peace in their region and particularly in the Indo-Pakistan Sub-Continent and, indeed, the interests of the peoples of India and Pakistan were not served by the continuance of tension between the two countries. It was against this background that Jammu and Kashmir was discussed, and each of the sides set forth its respective position.

II

The Prime Minister of India and the President of Pakistan have agreed that all armed personnel of the two countries shall be withdrawn not later than 25 February, 1966 to the positions they held prior to 5 August, 1965, and both sides shall observe the cease-fire terms on the cease-fire line.

III

The Prime Minister of India and the President of Pakistan have agreed that relations between India and Pakistan shall be based on the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of each other.

IV

The Prime Minister of India and the President of Pakistan have agreed that both sides will discourage any propaganda directed against the other country, and will encourage propaganda which promotes the development of friendly relations between the two countries.

V

The Prime Minister of India and the President of Pakistan have agreed that the

High Commissioner of India to Pakistan and the High Commissioner of Pakistan to India will return to their posts and that the normal functioning of diplomatic missions of both countries will be restored. Both Governments shall observe the Vienna Convention of 1961 on Diplomatic Intercourse.

VI

The Prime Minister of India and the President of Pakistan have agreed to consider measures towards the restoration of economic and trade relations, communications, as well as cultural exchanges between India and Pakistan, and to take measures to implement the existing agreements between India and Pakistan.

VII

The Prime Minister of India and the President of Pakistan have agreed that they give instructions to their respective authorities to carry out the repatriation of the prisoners of war.

VIII

The Prime Minister of India and the President of Pakistan have agreed that the sides will continue the discussion of questions relating to the problems of refugees and evictions/ illegal immigrations. They also agreed that both sides will create conditions which will prevent the exodus of people. They further agreed to discuss the return of the property and assets taken over by either side in connection with the conflict.

IX

The Prime Minister of India and the President of Pakistan have agreed that the sides will continue meetings both at the highest and at other levels on matters of direct concern to both countries. Both sides have recognized the need to set up joint Indian-Pakistani bodies which will report to their Governments in order to decide what further steps should be taken.

The Prime Minister of India and the President of Pakistan record their feelings of deep appreciation and gratitude to the leaders of the Soviet Union, the Soviet Government and personally to the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R. for their constructive, friendly and noble part in bringing about the present meeting which has resulted in mutually satisfactory results. They also express to the Government and friendly people of Uzbekistan their sincere thankfulness for their overwhelming reception and generous hospitality.

They invite the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R. to witness this Declaration.

Sd /-

LAL BAHADUR, Prime Minister of India.

Tashkent, 10 January 1966.

Sd /-

M.A KHAN, F. M., President of Pakistan.

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